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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Afternoon, May 23. 1982.

Lesson. Isaiah 38.

O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. Isaiah 38. 14.

Our beloved friends will observe that the text falls into two parts. First, with sweet unction and access to the holy ear and heart of the Lord, Hezekiah expresses fully, abundantly and with extreme clarity the feelings of his poor heart and soul before God. The expression is used only a few times in Scripture. He says, "O Lord, O blessed King and Saviour and Friend and Father, I am oppressed." In the second place he makes his petition to the Lord, and a most comprehensive, concise, complete petition it is. It covers every case of a child of God in all ages and every condition. "Undertake for me." So as the Lord helps the poor unworthy preacher I will endeavour to show the meaning of this anguished expression of his dear heart and ransomed soul. "O Lord." I am sure you are able to discern that he was one of those near to Him so there was access and liberty in his speech to the Lord. He turned his face to the wall and prayed unto the Lord. I will show his condition and make application of it in general terms to those who fear God in the congregation, and it will be congruous with the condition of many of you. "O Lord, I am oppressed." What is the meaning of it? There are three things in it: one in particular I will emphasise. It is when a poor soul knows harsh, unjust suffering. For instance, the Israelites in Egypt were oppressed. The Egyptians treated them harshly. That is a form of oppression. I suppose all through the journey of life the people of God know the harshness of the oppression of Satan and of their own wicked heart, and the nature of the new man of grace. There are wonderful things said by the Lord concerning His dear people in Egypt. He said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows," What a mercy that is! "and I am come down to deliver them" out of their sad afflicted state. Yet the remarkable thing was in their experience

of distress and sorrow, the more they were afflicted the more they grew.

Let us look at the third meaning of oppressed: what is it? "O Lord, I am oppressed." There is that which weighs heavily on your heart, and a heart tender, broken, a loving ^{heart} is capacitated to experience and knows what it is to be sensitised to joy and sorrow, and the more loving your heart the more you will suffer. It is almost paradoxical. You will want the Lord to give you a loving, tender heart, and it is susceptible to suffer pain and joy, and the greater your heart is in love the more you will suffer. I will refer to the holy Lamb of God in His unparalleled sufferings. How heavily He felt His sufferings! Nothing did He feel more keenly than when His divine Father hid His face from Him. He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" How keenly He felt the base treatment He received from His disciples, especially in His time of need when they all forsook Him and fled; they all ran away! I will dwell a little while on the word, weigh heavily on the heart. Hezekiah had three things that were weighing heavily on his heart, indenting it. First there was his sin. O this burden of his sin and guilt! The second thing was the prospect of imminent death, and third, the dear royal city was besieged, threatened. I remind you that he was only thirty-nine; he began to reign at twenty-five, and all these things rested on his poor heart.

I will make application of it to the Church of God. Are you oppressed? are there things that weigh heavily on your heart? The Lord knows the cases of all in the congregation, and I am sure this is congruous with the majority of those who fear God. You have several things that weigh heavily on your heart and rest there day and night; they press on you sorely. There are things that generally speaking you do not divulge to others. It is between God and your soul. How heavily they weigh on your poor heart! I believe I have found a few of you. There is a part with you that is entirely between the Lord and your soul; you conceal it: no one knows. It would be imprudent of you to refer to it. This is oppression. And you have those may be who are dear to you that weigh heavily on your heart, and also sore trials weigh heavily there in the tenderest part of all. Are you not thankful for the language of good King Hezekiah? I will give you a word. You know you may say, "What shall

I do under circumstances with things that weigh heavily on me?" There is only one course: go and tell Jesus. Look away from earth and all creatures and tell your beloved Saviour. Tell Him. This is what Hezekiah did. And in the path of life, in your profession, trade, business life there are things that weigh heavily. It is not easy, is it, because there is the experience of adversity as well as prosperity. There are times when "things around are cheering; Grace and providence unite;" but how soon it is that new trials surround us and they weigh heavily on our spirits. They are not only chronic: some are acute: not only old trials but also new, and these things weigh heavily on the spirit. It is between the Lord and your soul. Think of all the worthies of the Bible: Israel and the things on his heart; the supposed loss of Joseph, the mystery that must have almost haunted him day and night, to see the wonderful garment stained with blood. He must have seen it continually before his eyes, and the happy, loving Joseph, for he loved him more than all his children. He must have, ^{seen} and almost heard the voice of Joseph in all his initial joy of telling out what God had revealed to him. Could these things be harmonised? was it possible to understand the path he was walking? You may have the same as to the principle of it in your heart. You look back on a dear child in sweetness and innocence and love, and you felt perhaps the Lord was working in their heart and it was sweet to your soul; now all is a wreckage. These are some of the things that weigh heavily on the heart; griefs, sorrows, burdens, trials weigh heavily, and this is the meaning of Hezekiah. "O Lord, I am oppressed." Obviously the adversary had a hand in it to torment, grieve, distress his mind. Wonderful is the Throne of Grace, and to know that the door is ever open; the door of divine compassion and love so you may vent in His bosom all your woes. I suppose that which weighs heaviest is when the Lord has blessed you with His promise and an expectation, and then you come into a shattering trial of faith. What a word it is! What other trial is there to a child of God? If you said, "I am in ^{a trial} ~~adversity~~," what is it? The trial of faith, and the stronger your faith and the greater your expectation, often ~~is~~ the deeper is the trial of faith. All goes in the other direction until it appears impossible. "By this time he stinketh."

So, "O Lord, I am oppressed." There are things resting on your spirit with great weight. Whether you are in your teens, or twenty,

thirty, forty, eighty you have got a measure of this. Poor soul, yet rich! Try to tabulate: what is it that weighs on your spirit? You cannot speak out and say. It is something that is close to you, and dear and precious to you. It is a solitary path you tread and a painful path. You could say it is a crucifixion. "O Lord, I am oppressed." as though you would say to the dear Lord, "I have got more than I know how to carry. My load is heavier than I can carry." "O Lord, I am oppressed." Dear heart, you will not always be in this condition. Presently it will be, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee."

I come to the people of God in providence. I know what your immediate response to that will be: all are provided for now. We recognise the wonder of the provision made in our land. Sick, disabled, unemployed people receive what is just and equitable. There is such a thing as progressing favourably and then being redundant. You wonder what course to take and you find yourself in adversity for a while. What a condition to be in of suspense, anxiety, deep concern! "O Lord, I am oppressed." Here Hezekiah said to the Lord initially, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." He was not guilty of dishonouring the Lord and departing from Him. He sought with all his soul to do right before God. "O Lord, I am oppressed." There are things I have not named that oppressed you. Look at his impassioned petition to the dear Lord. The words of holy wisdom and divinely inspired speech pleased the Lord. You will breathe before Him, "Undertake for me." Only the Lord can: no one on earth can. He is able to undertake for His people; all of you who fear Him in all concerning you.

"Undertake for me." God give me wisdom to open the word. There are three things. You will see the beautiful flowing of the word if the Lord assists me. The first is, the Lord in His love, mercy, goodness entering into a Covenant engagement embraced all His dear people, and what He did was, when His divine Father gave Him His beloved Church He accepted full responsibility of the Church and all cases. Christ is responsible. What flows from this? He being responsible for His dear people

"He engaged to manage all,
By the way and to the end."

So receiving them and entering into a covenant with the Father and the

Spirit, and with us, I may use the beautiful illustration because it is Biblical, of holy matrimony. When two who fear God are united at the altar of God and become one, the husband enters into a solemn covenant with his spouse. It is a precious, beautiful, loving covenant, and the terms of it we may name as, he accepts in all ^{the} devotion and fidelity of his heart the full responsibility of his dear wife and of the children. That is the meaning of undertake. There is a solemn bond and covenant between the Lord and you and it covers everything; your soul, body (those who fear God) your dear ones as the Lord loves them; grace and providence, all your concerns. He accepted full responsibility. Do you see the beauty of undertake? He has undertaken, and it is to bring you safely, triumphantly through life with all its trials, reverses, emergencies; to bring you honourably through and land you in Glory, and this in a certain way: so His glory should be visible and His character and Name manifested and visible in all His dealings with and undertaking for you. It is the faithfulness of God, His compassion and love manifested in you in the way the Lord appears for you. So entering a solemn bond He received you, and this means He accepts full responsibility to bring you happily, peacefully, triumphantly through. I hope this will help you in the week in the outflowing of it. He manages you, yours, and your life. "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." You could not have anything better than that. You may say things look so confused, opposite, "Bow down, sense and reason, faith only reign here." He manages all.

Let us take the three points and see the wonderful flowing of truth. Entering a covenant, a solemn bond, full responsibility, and in such a way that His glory and beauty and all His perfections are manifested to the glory of His holy Name for ever and ever in you. You know the words in the Psalm of celebration. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." That is how the Lord manages for His people. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." It was so conspicuous that even the heathen acknowledged it. So, "Undertake for me." You go on, my friends; on your knees if you can; keep pleading before the Lord while you are in this. "O Lord, I am oppressed;

undertake for me." I am sure you will say, for us. Your heart is enlarged with love; for your husband, wife, dear children, grand-children, for all your friends. It is comprehensive; it covers all; your immortal soul and theirs. A good man said to me, "We are now twenty souls." and he felt the weight of them. How many are there of you? Go before the Lord and say, "We are thirty, forty: undertake for us" out of the bottom of your heart. What about you in your little family with so many souls? "Undertake for us." The Lord will not say 'No' when He gives the language of faith. It covers precious souls. "Undertake for me." It covers health, strength, the providential path, land, house, all: chiefly it is your precious immortal soul. What about it? If you have life in your soul you know the meaning of it. And our younger friends,, what about ^{it} in your work, your responsibilities? Does it ever come out of your soul; "Undertake for me"? So the fulness and the consummation of it all is that the Lord brings you beautifully, happily, triumphantly through and lands you safe on the happy shore, in white ^{robes} to sing His everlasting praise on high. Amen.