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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Thursday, October 30. 1980.

Lesson. Philippians 1.

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Psalm 138. 8.

A positive note in this sacred Scripture is provided by the gift of God and the exercise of it,- the gift of living, vital, saving faith. As we were just now expressing together in prayer concerning the orientation of our spirits, we rapidly look to self, our weakness, insufficiency, inadequacy and limited resources: we look at our sorrows, trials, difficulties; we look at the mountain range, formidable things, and the longer we look in that direction the larger they become, the more overwhelming they appear, and added to that Satan taking a mean advantage of a child of God in a tried state and we just sink. Wonderful it is, and I just postulate this for the comfort of all who fear God and may be in a low condition,- there is a secret that is beautifully expounded: it is something that is an enigma to human sagacity, unknown to natural reason, opposite to all the conclusions of those who are novices, or to the view of a child of God who is inexperienced. The Lord give you to know it tonight in the discourse. You are low, sinking; presently you will let go. The great secret is, underneath are the everlasting arms and the way to deliverance is often down, down, dawn. You know the Hymn, and it is something that is known, and it is reverently deliberate,- "A guilty, weak, and helpless worm, On Thy kind arms I fall." I know the experience because the Lord has taught me what is good for me,- to fall in His blessed arms. You will never sink, never be overwhelmed or come to nothing. Christ spreads beneath all His dear people His everlasting arms. So that is the secret. Let not your heart faint or be overwhelmed with sad doubts. It is not a great gulf that is beneath you so you fall into ruin.

Before I go further I will say this. It appears to me, especially after deliverance and in later days the Lord seems to keep His people low: we do not rise much in our own strength or in the earth. There are various things, a compound of things, and they vary considerably, but they have the effect by sanctifying grace of keeping us in a low place. The Psalmist

said, "I was brought low, and he helped me." and this may be the answer to your prayer to live nearer to the Lord. We should like as creatures to be independent: the Lord sees fit to keep us low. "Lay me low, and keep me there." You are not alone; you are not out in the wilderness, forsaken, abandoned, forgotten. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" She is getting near her blessed inheritance, nearer Home, close to Glory; she is leaning on her Beloved. Does that demonstrate your case? is it your portrait, leaning on your Beloved? We can never begin to assess or evaluate the wonder, glory and miracle of having Christ as our Beloved. We have spoken of the first side; our minds being so diverted and we look all round us at the mountains, difficulties, trials, and we begin to sink. I will stay on this for a moment,- I hope we shall stay there for ever, through Time and Eternity,- we sink into His blessed arms.

I will make this observation: how do you think you are going to die, child of God? Try to bring yourself to a very sober, blessed, gracious evaluation of how you believe you will die. I know we have no foreknowledge as to whether we shall be conscious or unconscious; whether it will be in a moment or after an illness: how do you think you will die? It all relates to the body of truth that has been promulgated. We have the activity of the precious grace of faith. Faith will be most active when a child of God comes to die because there is the great, glorious, triumphant last act of faith: it is the triumph of faith. Do you know what faith does? In your dying moments faith takes your precious soul and casts it on the mercy of God, into the arms of the Lord. Faith has enabled you firmly to view the Saviour, and she has enabled you to hold fast to Him and never let go. "My soul into Thy arms I cast; I trust I shall be saved at last." This is very wonderful and blessed indeed. I have been caught up on this deduction: it has all developed from being in a low place and coming lower, falling into His arms. Some of you, and I am glad to remind you, some of you remember at Mr F.Gosden's funeral this was referred to. When he was at Wadhurst in such trouble and out on his rounds he said to himself, "If when I get home I meet one more trouble I shall sink." There was another trouble bigger than the others, and he sank into His everlasting arms. This is a sacred truth to the people of God. It is opposite to human nature; we cannot follow it with a carnal mind: it is

God's way. How we need the orientation of our minds so we view Christ. Look up! Jesus before His Passion "lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and said, "Father." It was joy. This is the orientation we need. Friends, lift up your eyes to Heaven. You may say all looks black, hopeless, and you are so fearful; you can see no way of deliverance. Lift up your eyes to Heaven. There is no other way in praying for Great Britain and the nations of the earth. If only the Lord would open the eyes of a number so they lifted up their eyes to Heaven! This is Heaven's policy, prayer; spreading things before the Lord. It is a right orientation: we should 'keep our eyes on Jesus fixed', not occasionally,- fixed on the dear Redeemer. Everything changes then. "All things a different aspect wear." We see Jesus... you will know His love and character. If you know the Lord Jesus you will know something of the character of God. I will prove it to you. Once you know what it is to believe in Him, what is the next act of faith? You take everything, soul, body, Time, Eternity, all concerning you, and you place it on Him. It shows you have a recognition of His holy, righteous character. How many years have you been so favoured so that everything with you is in His hands? You put it there. You learn concerning His character and perfections, and the more you learn in the school of Christ the more you will love Him. His wonderful love shines forth as the sun in your eyes. His faithfulness, His immutability, what a bed-rock! It never changes. Wonderful is the faithfulness of God! What He has spoken He performs: what He begins He perfects; what He is the Creator of He brings to a blessed consummation. It is beautiful to you, and the Psalmist saw it and said, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Tried, anxious soul, in a path of tribulation, and there is no escaping, you would not wish to change with another: you have your lot, your cross, and the dear friends have theirs. There is a beautiful sermon, precious and concise in our terminal Hymn (769) I am sure you can pray this. Henry Fowler knew well the path: "What concerns me," What about it? does it completely describe your case? "What concerns me," those things I am involved in, bound up in, things that profoundly affect me. "What concerns me." What a volume is there! This is one of the sweet words in the Hymnal. I shall not hear you; the Lord will hear you: you speak to Him. Listen to a mother; see what concerns her. Listen to a father; see what concerns

him. Listen to the pastor and see what concerns him: and the deacons and the concerns they have, and the brethren in the ministry. "What concerns me." It describes your life, case, path. All God's honour is involved in it, and His dear, precious Name. And he goes on in a delightful manner,- "By Thy power and love perform." That is it: it is right on the Text,- performing. So the language of the Text is positive and beautiful, and certainly it is a revelation of the majesty, glory and honour of God, His divine will, holy decrees, heavenly purposes, omnipotence, everlasting love and covenant faithfulness.

So David,- yes, highly favoured, overwhelmed in distress and trouble; did he go through the furnace and the flood? was he a fugitive, did they pursue him to kill him? He says boldly, because his feet rested on the glorious foundation, "The Lord will perfect, complete, consummate that which concerneth me." Beautiful! I will say this: the Text is absolutely filled with positiveness; there is no uncertainty about it: He will. I give you this view. Surely if the Lord begins something, and we were reading about it in our Lesson: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," - if we take it through the line of truth;-say the Lord began a thing and never finished it: with profound reverence we may say His very Name and character would be sullied; it could not be otherwise. You cannot say, "The Lord commenced but He has not finished it." All concerning you He performs. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." I suggest to the friends, this is a good, comfortable, robust word. It is a cordial to revive, refresh you, and nourish your faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." I hardly know where to begin because here is such an ocean.

Take 'concerneth me.' Things that concern you concern the Lord, and things that concern you have reference to His eternal mind, holy will, covenant purposes, divine decrees, love, unfailing goodness and mercy. There is another sweet view of it,- we have named the foundation. There is this to be said: continually these souls are at the Throne of Grace, and you are especially when favoured, with things that concern you. You are not beating the air; it is not desultory; you go with things that concern you. How do you go with things that concern you? When indulged

and favoured you go so sweetly in the Name of Jesus, standing on the ground of His merit and the Lord receives it. He perfumes it with the merit of His sacrifice, of His accomplished priestly work of atonement, and the merit of His glorious Person and His intercession. These things are of the highest order: He hands them in to His Father. See how these things concern God: not once or twice,- the Lord keeps handing them in to His Father. This is a happy note, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me,"- there is no doubt it.

So I will speak for a few moments on 'that which concerneth me'. I will put a question to you: would you be able to tabulate (it is impossible before man) the things that concern you, to set them in order? By the help of ^{God} make it a little exercise tonight: what is it that concerns me? Set it out in order. I am sure by the help of God you begin with your soul: that should be the first of all. And the souls of those who are dear to you, your own. There is a second question: why are you concerned with these things? how did you become involved in them? Some might say, because it is my own flesh and blood. There is something further, deeper than that, infinitely deeper. You are concerned with those things God has made a concern in your spirit by His promise, by the path you tread, and you are bound up in it all. Try to think of this,- what a list! Will it help you for me to say to you in the Name of the Lord, try to think the Lord and you are concerned together? You are not down here on the earth all on your own: you and your Lord are concerned together in these things. It is beautiful and very precious.

So, rising to the apex the Psalmist said, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." You are concerned that you and your loved ones all get safe Home to Glory: you are concerned with your path through the wilderness, your lot. You are concerned with everything: nothing is light or easy or superficial with you. I go aside: take the dear younger friends we rejoice to welcome in the House of God. You say the time came when you were exercised about a partner in your life, and this is not a light thing. Your concern is to know the will of God and His choice, and so on, and that you should be "heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." These are major things. You are concerned with the promises and consequently the exercise the Lord has created ~~in your~~

in your heart. You are concerned with the mysterious path you tread; with the trials and difficulties of the way, that there will be a good issue. Any gracious person with a loving, tender heart and a disposition to look on the things of others,- and the concern of the day is overwhelming: you cannot dismiss things because they do not come to your door. I feel a deep concern as a pastor. And you have all the concerns and deep exercises of soul that there will be a right issue to them all.

So he says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Take David. He had wonderful days of success and favour, and one day there was the sweet consecrating oil that flowed over his head. "Arise," the Lord said, "anoint him: for this is he." O the diffusion and odour of the oil! Was he concerned? did he know the meaning of it? The Lord anointed him by His servant. He says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." After this took place you know the sea of trouble he went into. My friends, I cannot promise you less than that. You will find in every decade and every phase of the journey you go deeper. You think your troubles are overwhelming: they will be larger yet. Those near the Kingdom are able to testify concerning this. I have never forgotten an observation made by a son concerning his father. He said, "Father has met with a trouble that has made all the others as anthills," and I was with him in it. There are things that come, and they make all you have gone through in a number of years insignificant. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." You will prove the faithfulness of God. Did David fall at the hand of Saul? No. Was he under the shelter of the Lord's wings? Yes. Had the Lord something to accomplish and perfect in him? Indeed He had, internally and spiritually, and in relation to the kingdom. One day David is king of Judah, and later Israel, He died at seventy and he was spoken of as an old man, no doubt because of the pressures that had been on him. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." O the wonder of it! There is no need to be overanxious, dear soul: there is a precious One who will see you through. The Lord will perfect that which concerns you in your immortal soul, making you ready for Heaven, and your concerns in prayer for those you love. Blessed be God.