

Afternoon Lesson. Genesis 32.

As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. Psalm 18. 30.

A beautiful exposition of the Psalm, and in particular this verse of adoring faith is the beautiful language of another Psalm; namely, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed." (Psa.65) In that long path of deep trial and sorrow and distress of mind and spirit dear David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel walked following the time of his anointing, and his initial success as a type of our Lord Himself in slaying the great champion of the Philistines who was threatening Israel; following the great wave of popularity, God-given; and then the aftermath, the intrusion of Satanic power into this world of sin. On the level of those who fear God you will surely find after a season of peace, blessing, prosperity and favour, this hellish intrusion and diabolical power and threatening of Satan. But in all David passed through the words of another Psalm ring as bells pealing; "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." (Psa.44.4) So it was a hand of unerring wisdom, divine faithfulness covered him; immutable love upheld him; his Father's hand prepared the cup. Through all the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and there was the cumulative effect of the operations, teaching, blessing and refining processes of the Holy Ghost, so praise was waiting for God in Sion.

I wish this afternoon to emphasise for your meditation; in all you pass through there is this cumulative effect in the aggregate of the teaching, operations and graces of the Holy Ghost so it all builds up to the wondrous expression of adoration in the Text. Praise no longer waits; it is lifted to God in the heavens, as in this Psalm; "Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent." (Psa.30.11) This is the time when the silver trumpet is blown, the time of Jubilee when praise ascends His Throne. It is wonderful!

I might spend the whole of the service on this first clause. Friends

who have depth of spiritual understanding will see the dimensions of the clause. "As for God,- with particular reference to God.- his way is perfect." God is perfect: the quintessence of all divine perfection shines forth in the holiness of God. One of the amazing things concerning perfection as seen by us, is His detachment as the great supreme Being, from the whole universe. The redemptive properties of God's holiness we see in Jehovah Jesus; holiness that is not forbidding: it draws, invites, welcomes. It is propitious: it is not detached; it is involved. The whole of Deity is involved; the glorious Trinity, all the perfections of His character. Here is perfection. If you try to come to a deduction in your mind on the subject of what you rely on for time and in view of eternity, you prove there is a time when you come to the point that ^{it} is only perfection you can rely on,- God. If a thing has the slightest flaw it will fail. If your religion has the slightest flaw it will fail. There must be a perfection.

There is perfection in eternal wisdom that contrived the plan, that drew it; and in eternal love that effected and accomplished it. There is perfection in the Covenant of Grace that rests on the sure foundation of the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, and it is sealed with His own most precious blood. It is as sure in all the promises and blessings because of the perfection of His obedience. There must be perfection. You can have what is specious, attractive: if there is a flaw you are finished. If there is a flaw in your religion when you come to the time of greatest strain it will crack. Perfection alone you may rely on. The perfection of the Covenant, of the work of Christ,- it would not have been accepted apart from perfection. Only God incarnate could give it. Nothing could be accepted by God, only perfection. The Son of God gave it. "As for God, his way is perfect." He did not half deal with the matter: He dealt with the whole,- soul, body, person. He dealt with your troubles, sins, guilt, and the violations of the law we are guilty of. There is perfection in the work of Christ; in the work of the Spirit; in divine providence.

"As for God, his way is perfect." Undoubtedly there is in the word of introduction with reference to God, some allusion to self. "I am a sinner: as for God, his way is perfect." So in the whole economy of grace there

is perfection. The fear of the Lord, the grace, the love of God, the blessed operations of the Spirit from the holy initial to the final sealing, the preparation of the redeemed person for glory, here is perfection. The timing of everything, - "My times are in thy hand." (Psa.39.15) The Lord has caused me to observe closely, and given me the holy privilege of observing: here is perfection. You came back and say to yourself; "Jesus reigns! Here is perfection. You thought this, and you thought something else, but God's way is perfect. Things you had no inkling of a few years ago the Lord has brought to pass in your lives. "As for God, his way is perfect." Afflictions, operations, illnesses; God has the perfection of wisdom and love in them. "As for God, his way is perfect." If you can acquire by grace this concept of cumulative effect, - the building of things to the issue, you see the concept is all rising to the acme of praise and accomplishment.

"As for God, his way is perfect." I will give a few words in summary, if assisted, concerning the Text. As I mentioned in the forenoon this is a word for saints in their latter days more especially. It does not mean our younger friends are excluded, but I suggest it is more especially for those in the latter days of the journey, it may be in their fifties or sixties. I do not know. It is not necessarily those in the seventies, eighties, or nineties. It is a word especially for the latter days of a child of God, when things are moving to the blessed issue and consummation, the glory of the Kingdom and the accomplishing of God's holy purposes. It must be your favoured lot to remember all the way God has led you in relation to the prospect of entering the Land. I tried to express this morning, the word relates to an accomplished event. You look with wonder and love on all that has led up to it; and it relates to the prospect, and all that leads up to it. I hope you are able to assimilate this because it will help you.

"As for God, his way is perfect." So this is a word for you in your last days, with especial reference to the method by which the Lord is pleased to accomplish them.

The second and third sections prove to us that they relate to things that are accomplished. It has been tried but it has come to pass, or it

is about to. No doubt, when he was singing this song and playing on his harp he was on the throne of Judah and Israel. See the wonder of it! He was musing on all the way; giving you a sweet prospect in the Name of the Lord for your latter days, whenever they are. You will not look back with dismay on the way of the Lord,— you will on self and sin. You will not look back on your heaviest trials and deepest sorrows with regret. You will look back on them and see that out of those greatest sorrows came your greatest joys: out of your deepest distresses flowed your sweetest blessings. The preacher has knowledge of this: that is why I declare it before you. If you said; "Is this known immediately?" It may be; you have a sense of it. The word in Hebrews 12 is fulfilled. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." So this is a word for old age. We are not, of course, to be in a state of illusion concerning old age: it is the time when you begin to feel, at fifty, or sixty, or seventy that your days are few. You cannot look on some who are twenty^{years} your senior and think you will live as long as that. If you take Toplady or Dr Watts, their latter days were much sooner. Many of the choicest saints have gone to bliss in middle life; some in youth, some from our midst,— dear servants of God in middle life. So this is a word for the latter days.

I would like to stay with you who are drawing near to your latter days. Is this how you are living? Do you feel before God you have been largely weaned from everything of earth and the flesh and your one great concern is to be made perfectly ready to go home to glory? If people try to exhibit the glittering toys of life, super-expensive holidays, and so on, you say;

"What is this world to me?— that is how I feel

concerning it.—

This world is not my home;

A scene of pain, of grief, and woe;

When will my Saviour come?" (948)

I know you will not misunderstand on the question of rest and change. But the world has ceased in measure to have an attraction for you. Your concern is to be purged, cleansed, refined, pardoned; for the Lord to smile into your soul and make you ready for glory. Your biggest joy in

life is to come to the House of God; to sit at His feet and learn of Him. If you are in that position the Lord is bringing you to your latter days and this will not cause you a pain. You will rejoice at the prospect. O sweet soul! sweet state and frame of spirit! to live near the Saviour and in detachment from the spirit of a dying world; hearing His voice, seeking to see His dear face and to know His embrace. There is a word of very distinct instruction. That is to say, you will see how various vicissitudes in God's way in grace and providence are like a puzzle to the human mind. But as the Book unfolds all the pieces fit in until all is complete. How many of you have seen a few more pieces fit in to the puzzle of life? you say; "As for God, his way is perfect." In all your times of sickness and health, poverty and wealth, (though I think this must be comparative) the time when you were born and the time you die, all fits perfectly. "As for God, his way is perfect." I have felt that many times in conducting * funeral services and memorial services of the Lord's glorified saints. I could say; "As for God, his way is perfect." This is a word of great encouragement. Why? Because you have, if you are interested in it, a heavenly Father, and One who guides your weather beaten bark through the storm of life into the harbour. You have a Pilot, an Advocate with the Father, a Mediator; all the divine perfections in every act of God in and for you.

I will reiterate a word that is with me. Try to think in view of the Text of the three particular points. Think of what God has done for men, and what He is able to do in men, and through men. Think of what the Lord has done for you in the Covenant, in His Suretyship, in His priestly ~~work~~ activity now. The work of redemption is finished; His priestly work in the heavens continues for you. Think of what He has done in you, and is able to do through you. "As for God, his way is perfect." Presently there will be a morning without clouds. The sun will shine. "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (Isa.60.20) "As for God, his way is perfect." When you are landed on that shore where your mind was fixed before, you will say; "As for God, his way is perfect."

This is largely an exposition of the path David walked to come to the consummation, because if you actually examine it, here is an unfathomed depth. It is true to say that the trials of the people of God are trials of faith. If you think of your trials, -and they will be distinct and singular to you, -you will find that statement to be in harmony with truth. It is the trial of faith. It would never be the trial it is to you if it were not the trial of faith. You may walk in a trial in life and not realise it is of faith. Your faith is so small you cannot see it, yet you do not understand why it is such a trial. It is because it is the trial of faith, my friends. A child of God does not walk in a path of trial unless it is of faith. This is the path David walked.

He says; "The word of the Lord is tried;" He speaks of God as his Protector and the Protection of the protected. "He is a buckler." A buckler is a symbol of two things that are interlaced, - God, my Protector, and the protection, - how He protects. First, "The word of the Lord is tried." If you like, you can start here. This blessed Book, the Word of God is tried. I am not able now to give you figures, but the whole point is, ever since the Bible has been in the world the powers of darkness have tried to destroy it. We have the Old Testament and the New Testament: the spirit of the world is to destroy. It is tried, but it stands because "the word of the Lord endureth for ever, And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1.25)

I go now to what is personal. Take it from this viewpoint. - the spoken word, and the applied word; a word spoken to your souls; a word God has given you, spoken and received and so it is treasured in your heart and written on the fleshy tables of your heart. (I must confine myself to a few words on this,) I can see three ways in which the word of the Lord is tried. That is why I read the Lesson in Genesis. The word of the Lord, we read concerning Joseph, tried him: his patience and faith were tried in relation to the revelation ~~xxxxxx~~ God had given him. Let us look three ways at it, and we will start with what we read in that place. You know what happened. Jacob tried the word of God by faith. This is a most excellent method of wisdom. In the hour of one of his greatest troubles he resorted to the process of proving the word of God. He went to God,

and after he had reverently addresses Him he tried His word. "The Lord which saidst unto me." He brought out of his soul the word God had given him and proved it: he put it before the Lord. He said; "The Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee....And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Jacob proved, tested the word of God in his emergency and trial. This is a facet that is acceptable to God. You never thought of it, perhaps. It goes through the Book of God. Saints in the depths have tried the word of God and sought to prove it. They have unfolded it before God and tried it.

Another aspect is when the word of God tries you. We have a wonderful example in Psalm 77; how Asaph came to the point where he said; "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" The word of the Lord tried him; arrested him. This was contrary to the word and promises of God, to the Covenant of Grace and the character of God. The word of the Lord will try you. He made his confession. "And I said, This is my infirmity, - it is the word of the Lord trying me, - but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High." And there is a word in the hymn, when you are sunk in sorrow and wonder how you will get through.

"Be still, my heart! these anxious cares
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonour on thy Lord,
And contradict His gracious word." (961)

"For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Heb. 13.5)

The third point is, those who receive the word of the Lord by way of a promise and know in blessed consummation the fulfilling of the word are refined, purged, cleansed, so at the time appointed they are fit to receive the blessing. Amen.