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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves on Sunday evening 10.8.69 at
Ebenezer Clapham.

Hymns: 920, 692, 261

Reading: 1 Samuel 12

Text: 1 Samuel 3.18

"It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good".

It may be remembered that this chapter was read this morning and that in these chapters here we have a record of the birth of Samuel and of a number of circumstances that attended it, and the abundant proof and evidence that the Lord raised him up for a particular purpose. According to the following chapters we may understand that he judged Israel all the days of his life and that he was made very faithful. He was a faithful reprover to the children of Israel when they departed from the ways of the Lord, and when they sought a king to reign over them when God Himself was their king. I was intending attempting to speak from these words this morning but could not venture to do so, for they did not seem to open up to me quite as I felt desirable, and although I still feel this I have ventured to read them.

Perhaps I might say that quite recently I had a peculiar dream, I was in very troubled and confused circumstances, and this word kept repeating, "It is the Lord", nothing more than this, "It is the Lord", and it has rested upon my spirit. Now as I may be helped this evening, without going into more historical details of Samuel, I desire to apply myself to this verse in two particular aspects, first of all as relating to the doctrine that is conveyed in this particular verse, and also the effect in our experience, when it is felt in the heart as before the Lord concerning His ways with us.

It appears that Eli was brought to be very submissive to the will of the Lord in what had just been revealed to Samuel, and had been conveyed to him, for they were certainly very solemn tidings, which indicated with certainty the complete destruction of Eli's house; and also of his sons, and of Eli himself, for it

is recorded, "when I begin, I will also make an end".

In considering this as to the doctrine then, we may notice several things involved in it. First of all there is a view of divine supremacy in all things. In regard to the dispositions of God in creation we have to acknowledge that it is His hand that created and formed them. If we look up to the sky, or towards the sun, moon or stars we have to acknowledge, "It is the Lord", for no man has power or control over them, and yet there they are and they continue through the ages of time; the dynamic bodies of the heavens as they were by divine creation continue, and the very things that we see with our eyes are a witness to the Being, Glory and Majesty of God; and when we have storms and judgments come upon the earth, we are powerless in ourselves, we have to say, "It is the Lord".

"All our times are in His hand
All events at His command."

"Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commanded it not?", and who can say it shall not come to pass when the Lord commands it? "It is the Lord". We have a great record of providence in the Holy Scriptures. If we read the Book of Genesis, Exodus and those Old Testament Books, and New Testament Books, we can clearly see the wonderful hand of an infinite, glorious Being that reigns supreme over all things and is over all providences of our lives. Many of the Lord's people have been witnesses in both adverse and prosperous matters that "It is the Lord". There is a supreme power that rules and reigns not only in grace but in divine providence, as we have recorded in the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

There is a third point, and that is, the Lord indicates His divine supremacy over all things in grace in the salvation of His people. As we consider His divine decrees from all eternity past, and the unfoldings of those divine decrees in the purpose of God in the coming according to promise of the Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh, we need to bow our heads and say, "It is the Lord"; and particularly when we come to the great and all important matter of redemption, of the bearing away of the sins of His dear people that

are guilty in His sight, as that great and blessed atonement is opened up to our view and we consider and gaze by faith upon a once crucified Man, and the blood that He freely shed as the ransom-price of our deliverance from an everlasting curse, we can but say, "It is the Lord". When we contemplate this glorious Person Who reigns above, we have to say the same; there He is, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is there as the blessed Mediator between a holy God and sinful, guilty man.

"It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all divine,
Who has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine."

There is a divine supremacy and ruling power over all things, and as we consider this we have to say, "It is the Lord".

There is another aspect of this, and that is it calls for humble acknowledgment not only of His divine supremacy but His divine sovereignty. I know this is very solemn but it is a solemn truth, He is as much a sovereign, as a supreme Almighty God. This exercise of divine sovereignty takes us back again to His divine decrees in the choice of His people as set forth in the choice of Abraham and his posterity, as a national people they were separated from all other people on the face of the earth. This was the exercise of His sovereignty, His divine prerogative; and so it is in a spiritual sense, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy"; "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated". We need grace to bow before this divine doctrine. It shines all through the Holy Scripture; as we consider divine revelation we have to see this Almighty, omnipotent God, the Majesty of heaven, a sovereign God. This comes into all the dispensations of providence, we see it in so many instances, we see it in the dealings of God with Jacob, with Joseph, and many others and particularly with Job; indeed we see it in every case more or less. We see it in the Apostle Paul, and in the call of the Apostles and all His servants. Divine sovereignty marks all His ways with men, He is too wise to err and too good to be unkind. It is admitted

that some of the dispensations of God in His sovereignty confound us as they did Job and have done many others; but still He is a sovereign God. He has a right to give and to take away. He can open doors and close them; He doeth His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. This brings before us a sacred view of divine sufficiency, He is that God to supply the needs of His people in a sovereign way. We have to see that some people of this world have great affluence, wealth and property, while many of the Lord's people have known the depths of poverty; but they have proved the sufficiency of their God to supply their need, and to support in times of trial, suffering, loss and bereavement. "It is the Lord, Who can sustain beneath the heaviest load!" What is it that has been the support of so many of the Lord's dear people in their times of trial and affliction and many other sad things that they have been called upon to pass through? It is this, "It is the Lord". Again, in relation to His infinite wisdom, as we have been singing, He is a God not only of supreme authority and power in the exercise of His divine sovereignty, not only in the support of His people in their trials and afflictions, but also as a God of infinite wisdom, to guide His people through this wilderness, and He has said that He will do this, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye".

Secondly, there is the experimental factor because this is something that comes right into the life and experience of the living family of God. Evidently Eli felt submissive to the will of God concerning what Samuel had told him, "Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision", but Eli said "God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that He said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him". We may conclude that this response was very remarkable and commendable, and I believe we may say gracious, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". Eli must have known that it would result in his own death as well as of his two sons, but even

so, solemn indeed as it was, he could say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". I wonder how far you and I can feel to come to such a spot as this? It may be you can look back upon some particular things in your life where you have seen the hand of the Lord your God upon you in a particular way so that you could say concerning this or that providence, "It is the Lord". You may have seen Him go before you in a particular matter. You may have seen Him level a mountain or fill a valley to your wonder and amazement so that you have had to say, "This is the Lord's doing it is marvellous in my eyes". You have sometimes felt to be filled with wonder as you have seen the Lord appear for your help in a time of distress. You remember how He supported you in this or that particular time of trial, and even in some cases under bereavement. This is very great and very blessed, because as you are favoured to experience something of these precious things in your trials you have the seal and witness that the God of heaven is your God, that the supreme Majesty of heaven is your God, and that the exercise of His divine sovereignty has not been to your complete and utter destruction, although He may have brought you very low at times, very low indeed, yet He has not left you to utter despair, you have felt that secret prop, that divine support, that has held you when everything else appeared to give way.

There is another aspect of this, we are all natural in this sense viewed that we have a fallen depraved nature and it is not according to the faculty of nature to say, "It is the Lord", when His hand is heavy upon us, is it? Have not some of you known exactly the opposite? Have there not been circumstances in your life when you have felt that resentment and that rebellion, - so that you have not felt you could say "It is the Lord" under a spirit of subjection, but you have fought against His ways. Have there not been instances of this when you have inwardly, if not openly, fought against His ways and dealings with you? If you are one of His children I believe He will bring you in His own good time feelingly to say "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good"; this may

not mean what seemeth good to us, but what seemeth good to Him; as all that He does must necessarily be good, this viewed in a gracious Gospel sense indicates a sweet and a complete falling into the Lord's hands in the matter. "It is the Lord", as though that sums up all; "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". It is not always that a gracious person can be submissive; what shame and confusion of face must cover some of us because of that inherent rebellion. What rebellion and resentment we have sometimes felt, when we fought against the ways of the Lord. I remember a friend once saying, concerning the unfolding of providence, "I am not submissive", but I believe the time comes when the Lord comes over all these powers of evil within us, and this may be under His chastening hand in some way, to purge the dross, to refine the gold and bring it to light. He brings His people to say, "It is the Lord" and to be submissive to His will. Have you known this moment? You may say, and this is quite understandable, my cup seems filled with gall. So it may be, and perhaps it is, but is it only the Lord's dear people who eventually have to prove that there is something secret sweetens all. It is wonderful where, "It is the Lord" indicates a sweet falling into His hands; being passive in His hands and knowing no will but His, "It is the Lord". This is a sweet spot is it not? I remember when my dear mother was very ill, although she had a very strong natural clinging to life, and it was a very hard coming down with her, yet before she died, one day she said, "If I had my choice or the Lord's choice I would have the Lord's choice before my choice". She was able to fall into the Lord's hands and to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". Have you ever been there? Perhaps one might say this, and it can be easy to say it; it is, when providence is smiling, when our circumstances are amenable and things are going just as we would like them to; but it is not the Lord's purpose that it shall always be like this. Sometimes it is under the stroke of His hand that He brings His living family to say, "It is the Lord enthroned in light, Whose claims are all divine". Have you ever known this spot? Can you go

back to some time of heavy trial when the Lord graciously supported and comforted you in it, so that although He did not remove the trial He favoured you in your soul so that you could say, "It is the Lord let Him do what seemeth Him good". Whether it may appear to be otherwise is really beside the point, for He is inherently good, therefore He must be good in all His ways, all His dealings. It is a great thing, when the Lord brings you to this under loss or sorrow, grief or anguish of mind, how it alleviates it, how sweetly it softens the blow! It can bring you to feel that after all it was an evidence of His love to you. How mysterious is all this; but here it is and in concluding let me say it is profoundly sweet when we are really brought to it as Eli was, "And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good". May the Lord help each of us in a right way to do the same. Amen.