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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham on Sunday morning, April 25th., 1954

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"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause"
Job 5.8

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The afflictions that came upon Job are (as far as the reading of them is concerned) very familiar to us; the losses he sustained and the series of strokes which came upon him which reduced him to the last extremity; but what he passed through under them in his own soul's feelings, is not known very much, although we do believe that the Holy Ghost had a particular purpose in recording the Book of Job, because many of the Lord's people, when they have been in the depths, have found sweet consolation there. So although these trials and afflictions were peculiar to Job's case, his conflict, the darkness upon him, his interrogations with his friends and waiting upon God are, to some point, known and have been blessed to many. As to this chapter, I believe it has often been a sweet cordial to the living family of God who have been called upon to pass through some deep waters, and has afforded much comfort and consolation to them.

Although Eliphaz did not actually understand the case of Job, (and like his two other friends, suspected something wrong with him) yet he did give him some very good counsel - and that, in the first place - with respect to these afflictions, that they do not come by chance to us. "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward". That which is a natural effect therefore does follow fallen, depraved humanity. All trouble is consequent upon sin, all affliction, which would not have been, if man had not fallen from his first estate; but the consolation the Lord's people feel and enjoy in this is the fact that these afflictions are made to work for their good and are sanctified to them, and sometimes they can say they would not be without them. Perhaps this is seldom the case, but still Eliphaz

had some light upon this, for later in the chapter he says, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For He maketh sore, and bindeth up: He woundeth, and His hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." It will be a wonderful mercy to experience that, and I believe the Lord's people do. It is like a promise which carries us through this life and includes our departure from it, seven being a definite number taken for an indefinite, so that whatever may befall, no harm can actually attend it for "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" "He shall deliver thee."

It is good then, when we can seek unto this God; that seems to be the first point; it is not foreign to many of you and I believe it is not foreign to me. A number of us have felt and found the mercy and comfort of having a God to go to with our cause - to seek unto. "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause." This God who is so frequently referred to is a correcting God. It is good to seek unto Him who does chasten for sin. In the path in which the Lord's people have to tread, I believe they have their ears "open to discipline". The Lord opens them. Discipline is good; it has always been good and wholesome, rightly administered. It is good when it is exercised in families. God is a God of discipline. "He openeth also their ear to discipline", that is, He makes them watchful as to the Lord's purpose in it and desirous to find teaching under it, and for some sanctifying issue to attend it. So it is spoken of in the epistle to the Hebrews:- "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous". It is grievous because it is painful in itself by reason of sin within us - it is not joyous. "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby", that is to them who are rightly exercised under the chastening, whose spirit is humbled and repentance given following the dispensation of the Lord's hand.

It is a great thing to seek unto this God who has appointed the dispensation. Surely this was so in the case of Job although there are some strange and mysterious features attending his experience in relation to what may be termed the Lord's permission - in so far as that word may be a correct word to use. At the same time we have to realise that the Lord did give sufferance to Satan sorely to afflict His servant Job, and not, in this case, because of some particular sin that he was rolling under his tongue as a sweet morsel. "He was an upright man and one that feared God and eschewed evil", and was highly commended of God for his moral character, yet he was very, very sore afflicted - allowably so by the Lord - by Satan who charged him with making religion a kind of commercialism; a vile calumny that proved to be false in his case, absolutely; but Satan is a liar and the father of lies and will always be so. Sometimes it is difficult I know, to distinguish what comes from our own bad hearts and what comes from the devil; in fact sometimes we are in such a pass we do not know where we are or what we believe and when we come to such a pass, we find we have not much religion at all; but afterwards when the spirit is quietened and we have to deal with the Lord in the matter, we find mercifully that there is something real after all. I would seek unto this God, to this God that appoints these things for a purpose. Even Job believed that in his own case, for he said in chapter 23, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him." O you can be taught that whatever you may try to do, or however you may scheme this or that device in your own mind, the Lord will perform what He has appointed for you, and He will for me. It is true that this may include some bitter ingredients in our cup; it will do because divine providence has never designed that we should always have sweets and no bitters, although the same God is able to make the bitters sweet, and often He does. "He will perform the thing." Sometimes He performs things that we try to stop and sometimes He stops things that we try to perform, but as far as we are concerned,

whether our plans are carried into effect or not, they fall under the Lord's appointments. Nothing will ever fail with Him and what a mercy it will be for us if we are brought to feel that nothing will ever fail, concerning us, that is designed to be for His glory and our good.

Well, have you ever had to seek unto God? By this I do not mean have you ever been able to say a nice prayer, but have you had to seek unto God, sometimes under heavy burdens and things, almost as though there was no one else in the world but God and you and your cause? Who can describe what is involved at times in this seeking unto God? It is our mercy that we are permitted to seek unto Him who has "appointed the thing." Perhaps it may, humanly speaking, seem to be to little purpose; many things seem to be of little purpose, humanly speaking, and if the enemy can get hold of us and unbelief get a foot in for a time, we shall soon find ourselves saying, Nothing is to any purpose at all. But that is unbelief and is charging God with folly. There is an experience that is known to God's people often and that is being permitted to seek unto God in their trouble. This is the case all through the Scriptures, and every instance recorded is for our help and encouragement, not only the seeking unto God by the worthies of old in their distresses and trials, but the answers they received are recorded for our encouragement, because what God was yesterday and in the past, He is just the same today and will be the same tomorrow! Sometimes it is sweet to seek unto this God with whatever is pressing upon you, realising that He has appointed it.

Then there is another point in this seeking unto God. His people seek Him, realising that He has complete control over all things. Sometimes things come to us that we cannot control; we may try, and it may be rightly, to hedge up something this way and that, but all is to no purpose unless the Lord will. He has control over the matter, over your cause and everything concerning you; and sometimes it is very sweet to feel this. The Psalmist felt it when he said, "My times are in Thy hand." Maybe some of you at times, have felt

just the same as that and have been glad to feel it, have been glad to say, Lord, I would not have my times anywhere else but in Thine hand. It is sweet then, to be helped to seek unto this God Who has control over the matter that may be troubling you, over the affliction or whatever it may be that is pressing upon you. He controls it. Sometimes things get out of hand with us, and O, how often we would just like to round off this rough corner if we could, or straighten the road a bit and make it more easy travelling, but whatever the Lord has appointed He controls. Then, you say, 'It is of no use praying!' That is a suggestion that comes from the bottomless pit. I have heard that suggestion many times, but when faith comes into exercise rightly, you will be helped to seek unto that God who controls the matter and controls it for you. You might go in some trouble to a friend and he will say to you in all sympathy, I am sorry for the trouble you are in and I wish it were in my power to help you; but when you go to God, you go to a God who performs all things for His people and controls all the circumstances of their lives; nothing gets out of hand with Him. Perhaps there is something sweet about that. Sometimes you and I get against things and say, What shall we do with it? Well, the best thing to do is in the text and that is to seek unto this God who has control over it.

Then there is this. I would seek unto God who has a purpose in it. You may say, There seems no purpose in anything with me; I come out of my troubles and in some ways come out worse than I went in. Well, it may have done one good thing, it may have shown you what was in your heart more than you knew before and if it has done that, it has been to some purpose. I would seek unto this God who has a purpose in all things that He permits to fall upon His people. In some cases they have been very heavy things, though we are very favoured in many respects compared with our forefathers; but the hand of divine providence will put this or that bitter in your cup and the more you avoid drinking it, the more bitter it can become before you drink it. The Lord will see you do drink it and the more

you revolt against it, the more bitter it will be. Yet with all this there is something very, very sweet in being enabled to seek unto God.

It is good to seek unto God because when faith is brought into exercise in your heart, you know He can do something for you. Faith will always speak well of God and unbelief will speak against God; therefore when you get these two voices clashing, you may find yourself in a maze and wonder where the scene will end, even as Daniel did; but you will be sure to find this, that when you can get really near God He can clear the mist and though the purpose of the matter may be hidden from you, you can leave it there and find a wonderful rest in your spirit. Such a change can come over you in your feelings when you are able to get near God.

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause". We have to, or we need to, remember the greatness of this God, for here Eliphaz says, "Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number". All these great and unsearchable things are not all nice, namby-pamby things; they can be very rough in experience. They are great things and it is a great thing to have affliction sanctified and to know a measure of teaching by what you may have to pass through.

"I would seek unto God". It is a resolve then, and a gracious one too. I know things lie heavy with some of you in your circumstances and difficulties; and what better advice can I give you than what is here? "I would seek unto God." O the quietness, the relief, the rest, the strength, that is sometimes felt in this! I would not say always, because we have to prove sometimes that though we pray a lot about a matter and try to lay it before the Lord, it seems to get more awkward, difficult and conflicting than ever; but even so, there may be a trial of faith in your matters and it is still good to seek unto this God. He is a Friend indeed and though sometimes He seems to take no notice of you, in fact as Newton says, to be "intent to aggravate your woe", yet He has mercy in view and we shall prove it too. "I would seek unto God, and unto

God would I commit my cause". Unto this great God, this omnipotent God, of whom we read in the Scriptures; and when you can feel that He is your God, that will help you to seek unto Him under a sacred sense of relationship in the covenant of grace, that wonderful covenant of which we have been singing this morning. Then you can feel it good to seek unto your God. If God is our God, then, "If God be for us who can be against us?" Who can condemn us? Who can lay anything to our charge?

I would seek unto God, to this unchanging God. We change about a lot in our feelings and are subject to changing circumstances, but changing circumstances and an unchanging God can go as well together as anything I know of, because I believe we often prove the sweetness of divine immutability in and through the changing conditions through which we pass. Have you not found that so? If you have any grace in your soul you will have to seek unto this God, and so some of you have, many, many times - and not in vain either! Just imagine a poor sinner feeling to be at the ends of the earth, his heart overwhelmed, tossed about as a ship at sea without a compass, seeking unto this God and getting a standing, feeling a bubbling up in heart which enables him to plead for Christ's sake, having an argument put into his mouth - the precious blood of Christ - an unanswerable argument to gain the ear of God and get relief and blessing. I will seek unto God, seek unto this all-wise God who never makes a mistake! Some of us have had to say, I wish I had never taken that step, or I wish I had taken that step when I did not take it. We hope and believe we have done right and then conclude we have done wrong and have a sea of conflict about it and then in the end see we have done the right thing. When it is tried, it does not prove it to be wrong, for if it is right it will be tried and in the end we shall see it as much the Lord's leading, as when He turned the children of Israel about at the Red Sea and just as much as when He divided the waters, wrought deliverance and brought them through.

Then another thing. When His people seek unto Him they sometimes find Him. Perhaps you are not a stranger to what Job felt when he

said in chapter 23, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" Do you ever have to pray like that? darkness about your head, everything as dark and black as it can be, just like that, and then you say, O that I knew where I might find Him that I might have audience with this God, find that secret place, then I would pour out my heart before Him. I believe some of you have done - we have done! I believe there is such a thing as finding God in your troubles and not only finding Him but walking with Him. I have known that too, and that is very sweet walking. Nothing will make you more ashamed of yourself and fond of Him than the sweet sense of His presence, which silences an unbelieving heart, and enables you to say, "He hath done all things well."

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause" that is my case, the matter that is pressing upon me, whatever it may be, the thing I am walking in. It may be the trial you are being tried by, a trial of faith - your cause - some trial of faith that is pressing upon you now, that has arisen through a series of back-handed providences that have floored you, so that you have had to reel and struggle upon the ground and felt you would never rise again. Who has not had a trial of faith which threatens to make you turn infidel and atheist? Yet this very trial of faith that may rest so hard upon you when passing through it, has been the best thing you could have had, after all! What a strange school the Lord brings some of His people into! You may have had to say, I do not know why I should have had to come into this or had to suffer this. Some things do not seem right at all; the more you think of them the more you come into the feelings of Asaph in Psalm 73, you feel like a beast, a bull in the net, trying to get out this way and that, and getting into a bigger tangle than ever. O our foolish hearts! It was not because he was so wise just then; he says, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee." But there is something very, very sweet about this; perhaps you have left the beast behind and come to the other verse, "As I thought upon this, I was pricked in my reins." O the grief some of us have had because of the feelings

we have had rising up in our poor hearts against God; but further down this Psalm the dear man was enabled to get his deliverance and say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:" Your cause may be some kind of affliction. The Lord knows what it is! If it is an affliction then it is of His laying upon you, for we find the Psalmist saying, "For Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net Thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads". It is not very nice when we get into such a pass as that and yet he says, "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." How we need grace to walk in these things which the Lord disposes to lay upon us! Sometimes He lays upon His people sore things they would not have. What may be a sharp trial to one, may not be much of a trial to another, yet providence seems to afflict this one and that in different ways and they feel a little like the apostle who prayed to the Lord to have the affliction removed and yet afterwards was glad it was ^{not} removed, by reason of what the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." It must have been good to him when the Lord promised him sufficient grace rather than removing the thorn, for he said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." How sweet to come there! After all, even when we do for a time, presently we find old nature rising again and we would get rid of this burden, try to shun that cross, and so we go on - yet all works for the best in God's account. Have you ever felt you could sing hymn 412 through and believe it? It may be well to sing it when it is brought within; it is well with the righteous; but when you get some cross or irritating thing, it is not so easy to sing it, yet it is always sung best, I believe, by the Lord's people when they are in the depths and are favoured to believe it will be well in life or death and to all eternity.

I would commit my cause to Him. Well, you know what your cause is or what it has been. You have your cause, I may have mine. It may be a matter wherein you have special need of His help, His grace, so that with your cause you have to seek unto this God and commit it to Him. Sometimes we pray and are taken up with our troubles and difficulties as though we had never prayed at all, whereas sometimes and it is only when His mercy is manifested to us in it, there is such a sweet relief, a sweet committing, a wonderful spirit of resignation. Faith coming into exercise never quarrels with God; you can lay all at His feet, committing it into His hand, and believe He will bring you through. It must be a mercy to have a real religion that does not ~~go~~ spark out when troubles come, although it seems sometimes it will; but actually, if it is a real religion, it is more likely to flare up brighter when troubles come, because it is likely to bring us closer to God than before.

Well has there been any seeking unto God this week? O you say. I have done a lot of work and got on well, I have had a very good week really. Yes! but has the Lord come into your things? Has there been any seeking unto God or have you concentrated upon your things as though God was out of it altogether? I do not know why I am talking like this, but my point is just this, it is very, very sweet and blessed when we feel enabled to commit our cause to Him, especially when something crops up suddenly, so that we have to "drink the wine of astonishment" - and many of the Lord's people have had a glass of that. You may feel sometimes as James Bourne, whatever will come next? We do not know what will come next and it does not matter, so long as we have grace to seek unto God and unto Him commit our cause. Well, let us seek unto this God for grace to sustain, for wisdom to guide and direct, for right submission to His divine sovereignty - let us seek unto Him in whatever it may be. If we want a good night's rest let us seek unto this God. If we need help in some particular trial let us seek unto this God. If we need quietness under disturbing events, let us seek unto this God and it will not be in vain, for the Lord is faithful to His own invitation and promise, who has said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I AM meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And I believe that is the issue of seeking unto God.

May the Lord help you then, to follow this advice.

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause".

May the Lord grant us His mercy and blessing. Amen