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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Uffington on 5th. May, 1970

Text: Psalm 119.89

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

This remarkable Psalm contains many different expressions evidently of what was in the heart and experience of its author, David, and they are the experience, more or less of every living soul, every vessel of mercy, whose eyes are opened; these are their confessions and desires and thanksgivings. This verse refers particularly to the immutability of God Who has Himself declared, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". It is our mercy that God is immutable, which is essential to His divine character, for a changeable God would be no God. Change belongs to creatures, but immutability belongs to the Creator Who is eternal, and is the same in all His divine perfections, in the fulness and glory of them and will be for ever and ever.

I would like to speak, as I may be helped, of what we may understand by the Word, "Thy Word is settled in heaven". By the Word we may understand, doctrinally, in the first place, the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is declared to be the Word in the Holy Scriptures as in the Gospel by John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Here then, viewed like this, is the Word, that is God, Who is for ever settled in heaven. We have this in other places as relating to His blessed Incarnation, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us", (and we beheld His glory)". We may not feel to go as far as that, we cannot in the same sense that John did behold that glory, as he did behold it when he saw the Lord transfigured on the Mount, but even so I believe, and I feel sure, that the Lord's dear people do behold the glory of Christ by faith and rejoice in that glorious, blessed Person. He is said to be the Word made flesh that dwelt among us, and besides this in John's Epistle we read, that "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One", and these Three are essentially

and unitedly immutable. It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the same yesterday, today and for ever and this refers to the work that He accomplished. What He came to do when He assumed human flesh was all settled in the blessed covenant of grace, before the world was, and this divine settlement is confirmed by what we read in the prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah that, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities". Everything pertaining to His substitution which should take place in the fulness of time was for ever settled in heaven. The same point refers to His all prevailing mediation in glory now, the position that He occupies where He is; all is settled, everything is settled relating to the eternal redemption and its ultimate effects in the divine purposes of God as though it had already been. This is confirmed in the epistle to the Romans where we read of divine predestination "For whom He did foreknow" - He foreknew His people before the world was, and all was settled concerning them in that divine covenant, that is in all things ordered well. It is all settled there; nothing hinges upon an uncertainty as to whether it will finally materialise; nothing hinges upon the schemes or devices of men; all is settled, and was settled in the covenant of grace, in the divine decrees of God, in the exercise of His sovereignty there. We believe that He made choice of His people "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate", - that is to pre-determine with an immutable purpose, an unalterable decree, an unfailing purpose, - every one was there predestinated in God's decrees and all is settled.

Moreover this refers to the ultimate glorification of His people, of which we read in the Holy Scriptures, we read that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him". We cannot conceive these blessed mysteries. We have not yet entered the realms of eternal bliss. It will be a wonderful mercy of mercies if we do one day; but all is settled concerning us; whether we shall or no, all is settled, immutably settled. Every

one of the Lord's dear children was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, where all was settled. However uncertain things may appear to us, nothing is uncertain with God; although some things fail with us in our efforts to accomplish them, yet nothing fails with God; all is settled there. The eternal happiness, peace and joy of the redeemed in glory is all settled. Although they are a number whom no man can number, as we read in the Revelation, yet they are not a number that God cannot number; He knows how many and where they are, and who they are. What a wonderful mercy if you and I are favoured to be among them.

Is not this an all important question? Do you not feel that it is? Perhaps you say, carnal reason would say this, If all is settled how can I alter it? If it is all settled, if I am to be saved, then I shall be, and if not, how can I alter matters? That is Satan's fatalism; that is the devil's sentiment; there is no reason so to conclude. They are a number whom no man can number. Our concern, if we are rightly exercised about this, is to wait upon the Lord, to have it made clear whether it is settled well for us; that is the point. Divine decrees never militate against the open invitation of the blessed Gospel to poor and needy sinners; divine decrees confirm it, for when one is quickened and brought to feel his needy condition before God, he bears that evidence that the Lord's favour was toward him before this world was. This is proved by the Lord's own Word when He said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me". This is all settled, you see, as to who they are, and how many, that were given to Christ in that divine covenant of peace and grace. It is all settled there. The Lord Jesus refers to this in 17th. John, and in other places as I have just mentioned, "Those whom thou hast given Me" - this was all settled - but He says "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me". They shall be found coming to Me, this will prove that divine settlement, to some point, in our own experience. That cannot satisfy our feelings, but even so all those who are predestinated in the divine decrees, whose everlasting destiny God has permanently settled, will, in the Lord's own time,

be brought to know Him, they will be brought out of nature's darkness into the light and glory of the blessed Gospel.

All is settled. Is not this true in relation to the Holy Scriptures and His blessed promises? All is settled there. We find the Apostle Paul saying that "the promises of God in Him - that is in Christ - are yea and in Him amen", that means that they are all settled and absolutely certain of their fulfillment. Every promise, in Christ, that God has made concerning His people is settled for ever, in Christ yea and amen. They are not 'yea, yea' and 'nay, nay' promises, they are not conditional promises, these Gospel promises. There were certain conditional promises as relating to the children of Israel and their settlement in the land of Canaan, and their peace and prosperity there, and all temporal blessings which were conditional upon their obedience to the commands, word and laws of God, in a temporal sense. That was a conditional covenant under which they were in that aspect as to their happiness in their settlement in the promised land. But the promises of the blessed Gospel concerning the Lord's dear people are not conditional upon them as to any merit in them, for every condition of the covenant of grace is fulfilled in Christ, yea and amen there. Every condition of that covenant was fulfilled by Him in His substitutionary work in the days of His flesh.

Therefore in relation to the Lord's people and their everlasting destiny we may say that "all is settled" in the divine purposes of God, all is settled in heaven, but although this may be and is perfectly true, the great point is whether it is settled for us there, and whether we have part and lot in the matter of these divine settlements, whether you and I are incorporated in that covenant that is in all things ordered well, as David felt that when he said, "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation, and all my desire". He could feel that it was all settled well for him. Can you feel that all is settled there well for you? Can you feel happy about this? Have you and I any evidence to confirm the fact that we are incorporated

in that blessed covenant? It is a wonderful mercy if that is so. But you may say, How am I to know that it is so? That is to be known by the blessed work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Can we trace anything of this? Can we trace any divine work there as to the new birth, any awakening of our consciences to our condition, any perception of our lost, ruined and guilty state in the sight of a just and holy God? Is there any trace of this? These divine settlements may be very attractive to a believer, and they are; but the point is, can you and I feel they incorporate us? Is all settled well for my, for you, everlasting destiny? It is of such supreme importance to us what that destiny will be, but I believe our interest in this is borne out by the soul exercise that we pass through when we are brought under some conviction of our sin, when the fallow ground of the heart is broken up and when we are brought to see and know something of the Majesty of God as the prophet Isaiah speaks, "Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts". It is a mercy to be brought down; our interest in these divine settlements can only be borne out by the Spirit's work within us; it is true that we may feel uncertain, but is there that inward desire after these things? Have we a solemn exercise about our state and case? Can we say with the hymnwriter,

"Tis a point I long to know,
(Oft it causes anxious thought),
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

Is that in your heart? These soul exercises confirm our interest, although not to our own satisfaction until the Lord appears to our deliverance.

It is a mercy to have a positive religion. We speak of that good Spirit's blessed witness in the hearts of the Lord's people, that, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"; Moreover it is said there, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God". This is confirming then if we can feel those inward movings, those soul

exercises, that prayerful concern, that waiting upon the Lord, a need of Him felt in our hearts. But there is something more than this. It is that liberty that we need, it is the Lord's voice that we desire to hear, it is that blessed assurance within that we long to feel, "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation". What can assure you then that it is settled in heaven for you? It is when that good Spirit witnesses to your interest. Perhaps you say I do not know what that really is. You will know when He does, for it is a blessed sealing upon your heart. This can be by applying a word there with heavenly power, this can be by a taste of His pardoning love felt in your heart in forgiveness, in the removing from your conscience of the load of guilt that has pressed you down. This can be by a sweet view of the Saviour, some revelation of Him in your heart, when you are brought a little in your soul's experience to what we read of in the Canticles where the church says, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love". This brings into your heart a sweet assurance that all is settled well for you in the immutable decrees of God for -

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves
But loves them to the end"

It is a love settlement, it is a being settled in His love from which nothing can separate, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven".

There is another side to this, beautiful as this may be. Divine settlements also refer to those who are lost. All comes within the Lord's settled purposes, for we read of the Apostle Peter, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, (that is unbelieving) the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed". This is a very solemn thought, not designed to bring despair to a waiting one, who may feel to be walking in darkness; but to those to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, those who have no care for Him, no desire for Him, who

reject Him. The Apostle there evidently refers to the unbelieving Jews, "He came unto His own, His own received Him not". They despised Him, scorned Him, hated Him, persecuted Him, blasphemed Him, but their destiny is appointed. It is a solemn thought, not only are the eternal, everlasting blessings of heaven appointed for the redeemed of the Lord, but the divine judgments of God in punishment upon the ungodly, the wicked and profane who live and die in their sins. Their destiny is appointed unto them. How solemn is this. We find the Apostle writing to the Thessalonians "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him". All this is blessedly settled, but also, alas, the destiny of the wicked is settled in the sovereign purposes of God. Wrath, wrath will fall upon them for ever and ever, as we read in the book of the Revelation, they shall fall into the bottomless pit for ever and ever, and endure the wrath of God in everlasting burnings. Oh dear friends, what a trembling thought it is! Has it ever made you tremble in the prospect of this? I believe I know what it is to tremble in my very frame as to what my destiny was going to be. I remember once in my younger days when I was suddenly taken ill with an haemorrhage and I thought I was going to die and I was dark in my soul; all was so uncertain, and it brought a solemn trembling lest I should die and be lost for ever; but I believe the Lord appeared later and gave me to feel that it would not be so, and that I had a part and lot in the matter with His dear people and their settlement one day in heaven. Not very long ago, very, very early one morning, as is sometimes the case with me, especially in my ministerial labours, I was meditating upon these things, feeling to need another token from the Lord that it would be well with me, because as you know the Apostle Paul himself uses the expression although he had been a preacher to others, "lest I myself should be a castaway". But I was seeking for another token and it came like a voice to me, "All is settled". It came three times, All is settled, all is settled, and it was like the Lord saying, "Why do you want another token? - all is settled". It was

blessedly confirming, it was a wonderful help to me. I felt that all was settled well, and I could say with the hymnwriter, "And my soul approves it well". It is very, very sweet, friends to feel even for a few minutes that all is settled for us in the love of God; that all is settled in love to His dear children, and in love to you, in love to me, how sweet this is. You may know more about this than I do, what it is to feel in a particular way that the arms of divine love embrace you and will never let you go,

"Once in Him in Him for ever

Thus the eternal covenant stands"

That will never break.

Oh have you felt this? Have you had this sweet moment, perhaps it may be after years of soul exercise, as it has been with some of us. Yet in the Lord's appointed time it comes, and that is settled too, when, in His appointed time He breaks through the clouds between; the time of love comes when, as one says,

"We shall clearly see,

Not only that He shed His blood,

But each shall say for me".

Oh when you can say that, how sweet it is! "For me". When you feel you can say that, "He loved me and gave Himself for me". He will never break away from it. If He said, "It is finished" for you, your heaven is secure, although the days of darkness will be many, Even so as we find some of us now, the powers of nature fail and we long to feel a sweet breaking in, to feel our hearts softened with His sweet love so that we can feel that the sting of death is drowned in the atonement, that all is settled, that He will never, never, never leave our souls a prey to hell, for all is settled. Here His dear people are on a foundation that can never be broken or fail them, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, never, never! All is settled! It is a sweet moment and what is the poor world then? It is all yours in a Gospel sense, although it is nothing to you then, for the Apostle says, "All things are yours, ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." Oh to belong to Him, to be a member of that mystical body, to feel that before this world ever was He loved me and will for ever, for ever; that no floods can drown it, or fires or flames burn it up; all is immutable. Think of the future. Oh what a glorious future for these for whom His Word is settled that they shall be saved. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard" - no - but if you know what it is to feel something of this sweet love shed abroad in your soul, then you know what heaven will be like, for heaven will be a heaven of love. May the Lord look upon us, for we have eternity before us, and give us to feel that all is settled. Very soon some of you, and myself, will have to leave this poor world. O what a wonder of wonders to feel that all is settled, and as a dear old man at Brighton who has long since gone to glory used to say in his prayers, "Lord when we come to die, may we have nothing to do but to die". O may it be so with us, to feel that all is settled, and to say "And my soul approves it well". Amen.