

WAITING FOR THE LORD

SERMON by Mr J H GOSDEN

preached on Lord's Day morning, October 10th 1937 in Galeed Chapel, Brighton,

Text: Psalm 39 v. 7-8

And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

The psalmist here seems to be taking a survey of time and of life, and he is sensibly in the midst of a wicked generation and feels it; and doubtless being a man of like passions as all men are,¹ was more or less influenced by the condition of those around him. But grace was very active in his heart, and he was brought by grace to a resolve, with regard to his surroundings and environment, to take great heed to his ways, his words and his thoughts. For although we are not saved by our own carefulness, nor by anything that we do, yet if and when the Lord saves people, His grace works effectually in them from time to time to the overcoming of their sinful propensities. There is no difference in any of us in respect to merit, if grace is in our hearts – any of us. There *is* a difference between those in whom is the grace of God and those in whom it is not; let us never forget that. For religion is not a mere notion; it is not a superficial thing; it is an inward work of God the Holy Ghost.

But the psalmist was a good deal perplexed: he saw God's great works, His judgments, and the wicked, and the turmoil, and how that men were troubled and disquieted, and resting here and there after gaining this world, and he said, "Surely they are disquieted in vain" (Ps. 39 v. 6). He saw the fallacy, the vanity, of all those pursuits of men after that which would soon vanish. And while he mused upon these things a new fire burned, and he asked God to give him a record for the knowledge of his days: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am" (Ps. 39 v. 4). He was brought to first principles, brought back to that clear-cut issue, eternity, and his eternal prospects.

What an infinite mercy it is when at times we get our minds cleared of traditions and prejudices and preconceptions and notions, and are brought back just to simple, solemn, vast, eternal considerations: the brevity of time, the short span. The psalmist says here, "Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth" (v. 5) and speaks of the vanity of men who walk "in a vain show:" self-consequence, self-importance, pride; he saw the emptiness, the hollowness of it, as it related to eternity. I think it is Bunyan in his 'Grace Abounding' that speaks of how he was amazed, when under concern about eternal matters, to see men, dying men, put about by the trifles of time, and greatly disturbed because they thought someone was rising a little higher than they, greatly disturbed because they could not get all their carnal mind desired of this world, put about by these temporal and perishing things. "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall

¹ As Paul says, "We are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14 v. 15).

gather them" (v. 6). Tiptaft, I believe, used frequently to say, speaking about the vanity of ambition: "Six feet by two is all we shall need presently." And yet man is disturbed; the pride, passions, vanity and vicissitudes, of this goodly world take the minds, the hearts and strength of the most of our fellow-mortals; and we are no better by nature. You may look around the world, and sometimes be stirred up with displeasure by seeing the foolishness and the vanity of men. But look into your heart, look into my heart, and see the same things! It is only grace, only the life and light of God the Holy Ghost, that gives a right prospective, a true view of eternity and its vast importance and unending interests, and of time and its relative unimportance. And yet if we have this right prospective of things, it will give us a consideration of the short 'handbreadth' of our life. It is only a pretence if people talk about being concerned about eternity, and are not concerned as to their lives here. It is a piece of empty profession for people to talk about hoping for heaven if they are unconcerned as to the Lord's presence while they are here. The apostle Paul, taught by the Holy Ghost, and greatly blessed, speaks of his citizenship being in heaven, his conversation there.² That is the true life of the believer, and so his life here will be more or less regulated according to his hopes; as it is in John's epistle: he "that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3 v. 3). And it will be a trouble - it is a trouble - to every gracious character, that he should find within him those motions of sin which attempt to tyrannise over him and divert him from his one great aim and end, which is God.

In the text the psalmist makes an inquiry of the Lord; or rather, he puts his case out before the Lord: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee," as if he could face the whole world, all the world contained, and could say, 'I want only that much of it as may please Thee to give for my use as a pilgrim; I want only that which is convenient for me and good for my spiritual condition; I want not heavy clay to be clogging my feet; I want not to be burdened with the things of this time state, but only to have that which will carry me honourably through.' "What wait I for?" The man was sober here; he was not intoxicated with the things of this world; he was not immoderate in his desires now; "covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3 v. 5), was not now prevailing in the man. He saw God; he saw the vanity of time things, the importance of eternal things, the shortness of life; so he wanted God. He wanted God in the remainder of his 'handbreadth' of days here, and hoped in God to bring him into eternal blessedness.

"What wait I for?" It is very solemn to stand before God like this, to bring your own judgment, your own affections, your own will, and your very being and life and interests before Him, and lay them all out before Him: "Lord, what wait I for?" I do not wait for something in this world; I do not wait in ambition to attain to this or to gain the other. "My hope is in Thee," to do in me and for me and with me as may be for Thy glory, to work in me all the good pleasure of Thy goodness and the work of faith with power.³ "My hope is in Thee."

Now there are some definite things for which the Lord's people wait. They hope in God, and wait for that which He will communicate to them for their benefit, for their spiritual good and satisfaction. You know the Lord said to Martha, "Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10 v. 41-2). Now it is that "good part" that gracious people wait

² "Ye are ... fellow citizens with the saints" (Eph. 2 v. 19). "For our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3 v. 20)

³ "We pray ... that our God would ... fulfil in you all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thes. 1 v. 11).

upon God for: the knowledge of salvation, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the comfortable enjoyment of His favour and blessing, and His forgiveness and presence. It is spiritual blessing for which the child of God waits. Says one:

“Give us His gospel and His grace,
And then, Thy will be done.”

(Hart; Gadsby's 808)

He has not a desire beyond that. Whatever the Lord's will is with respect to him in this life, whether rich or poor, sick or in health, whatever the Lord's purpose may be for him in circumstances, this one thing needful he waits for - the knowledge of God in Christ, of His favour, His salvation, His love.

“What wait I for? My hope is in Thee.” A waiting condition is very trying; it requires grace to wait submissively upon God and for Him. One of the most difficult but most real exercises of faith is a waiting frame of mind. Waiting is not sloth; it is not an indifference; it is not merely lying down and just letting things take their course. There is an activity about this waiting; there is a felt need, and a desire for the things waited for. Waiting is an act of love according to the Scripture. The apostle in the Corinthians quotes out of Isaiah 64, and says, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” In Isaiah it is “for him that waiteth for Him” (1 Cor. 2 v. 9; Isa. 64 v. 4). The apostle transposed the words, not without meaning. What you wait for, you will desire of Him who has it to give - that which will be to your soul's eternal good. And these communications will be an object of love and of trust. “What wait I for?”

Now if the Lord has begun to work in you and me, to show us the vanity of time and the importance of eternity, the awfulness of a lost soul and the blessedness of a saved condition, that is a very great mercy. But if He has begun, we shall be brought to a realisation of how much more we need Him to do in us. If He has given us any grace, it will only make a greater capacity in us for more grace. If He has granted us any knowledge of Himself in Christ, it will intensify our desire to know Him, and make all other knowledge comparatively nothing to us: for the knowledge of Christ is eternal life.⁴ And for the desire that he had for this knowledge, the apostle reckoned all things but loss and dung and dross.⁵ It does amaze us - it amazes me at times - that I cannot find in my heart to be troubled about the vanity of time, to be troubled about the opinions of men and the possessions of this life, which will soon be done with, when eternal issues are at stake.

“What wait I for?” Some of you may say, ‘I am waiting for and upon the Lord to grant me the full assurance of His favour, and of my interest in His salvation.’ It may be the very thing immediately before you, lacking which you feel short, and yet you are not in despair. This man was not; his hope was lively; therefore he waited with expectation and with earnestness. *Tempted to despair* we may be, as we feel our lacks, as we are not in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence, and as we may feel to be very short in our experience compared with what is to be known and experienced of God. We may be tempted to despair, tempted to dejection; unbelief may be very strong in us, together with the world and its allurements, and the affinity we have in our carnal minds with the world. But grace comes uppermost sometimes, and

⁴ “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ” (John 17 v. 3).

⁵ “Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ (Phil. 3 v. 8).

makes a poor man say of all those things, 'Lord, there is one thing I want, only one thing: to know Thee, Thy salvation, Thy love; to live near Thee, to have impressed upon my heart a sense of Thy redemption; to look more deeply and enter more fully into the mysteries of the gospel, and to be more enriched in experience; to be more like Thee, to be more fruitful, and to have that all-satisfying witness of Thy Spirit that I am truly put with Thine own chosen and redeemed people.' "What wait I for? My hope is in Thee."

To have a living or a lively hope in a living and real God, and to be so engaged in waiting for Him, is a great blessing. It has incidental blessings connected with it. For instance, this is one incidental blessing: it has a sanctifying influence. Need and hunger and desire of soul, with some apprehension of what the Lord is and has to bestow - this is one of the Lord's ways of separating His people from sin and from the world. No effort of our nature will separate us from sin; no natural will or determination will keep us from the world. We need and must have for this a counter-attraction and influence which is greater than all else, and that counter-attraction and influence is God: who He is, and what He has to bestow.

"My hope is in Thee." Can we say this: 'Our hope is in God'? Look at David in the 42nd Psalm. Oh how beset he was, but how he thirsts for God! And so, with all his besetments, and specially the cruel enemy who daily said to him, "Where is thy God?" (Ps. 42 v. 3), - with it all he hung on God and charged his soul to hope in Him. And what in God did he hope in? His faithfulness: he said, "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (Ps. 42 v. 5). 'He will not forsake me, and therefore I will remember Him, remember what He has done for me, said to me, and promised He would do for me. And, remembering that, I would hope in Him, and wait for Him, and expect Him to bless me according to His word, that I might praise Him.'

One of the great aims of a living character is to be permitted to praise the Lord; and an honest soul cannot praise the Lord unless he has something to praise Him for. He knows he ought to praise Him; he feels it is most desirable to sing His high praises; but oftentimes he may feel unable to do so, because he feels to lack that blessing he needs, and he feels to be so full of sin, so full of corruption, so full of unbelief and ignorance, that he dares not open his lips in praise. But he waits for the Lord; he hopes for the Lord's mercy, hopes in Him as He is the God of salvation, that He will do according to His word. And what is that? Well, one thing is this: the Lord has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me" (Isa. 49 v. 23). He has not said "unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain" (Isa. 45 v. 19). He has promised that the soul that waiteth for Him shall live, shall live to prove His faithfulness, and that he is not ashamed. It is written in Isaiah that "in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. 45 v. 25). Some of you may be waiting for that. You may say, 'I often feel condemned; I often feel that I shall not be justified, and that I shall be condemned and cast away at last.' There are only two states; they will be absolute one day: lost, or saved. And really sometimes the Lord brings His people right up to this: they cannot be satisfied with merely hoping to be saved; they want to *know* it, and they believe it is to be known. I do not mean by that that we should despise a hope. Oh, a gospel hope in the mercy of God, hope in the blood of Christ, hope in His precious intercession on high is a great thing; but if we have that hope in those things, we shall be waiting for the fulness of them, longing to know them; we shall not be satisfied until we know them to the full.

"My hope is in Thee" for this, that Thou wilt send to me the knowledge - bring it into my heart - that I am by Thee fully justified, fully pardoned, fully redeemed. Is that your hope? Is that what you are waiting for? What do you wait for in the service when you meet with the

Lord's people? What do you look for in your inspection of the Scriptures? And what is your object when you go on your knees in secret before the Lord? You may say, 'Well, I have trouble in providence, I have needs in my family, I have afflictions; and these things I wait upon God for.' And well it is if you do; but short it is if, having these things met by God, you are satisfied. There is something more than this needed, something more that the soul needs. These are for the body and for time and for circumstances. Salvation, justification, redemption unto God, forgiveness of sins, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, a realisation of being an adopted child in the family of God, and the warrant of the Lord to unite with the people of God in praising Him - these things are for the soul; these are spiritual blessings. And it is these spiritual blessings and many more which in Christ Jesus the Lord has reserved and laid up for all His people; and therefore they are brought to wait upon Him, and hope in Him for them.

There is a scripture in the Corinthians that seems to express what I am trying to show. The apostle says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2 v. 12-3). And I believe that this working out of salvation is largely in waiting upon God, praying to Him, looking for Him, seeking communications from Him - points in your experience. You want Him to bring you to certain points. This may be one point with some of you (it may have been for years - I believe it is with some of the Lord's people): you may just be waiting and saying in effect to Him from time to time, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Ps. 35 v. 3). Well now, if you lack that, if it were asked you, 'Now has the Lord satisfied you?' some of you might say, 'No, not fully. I hope in Him. I do not think He will cast me off. I have sometimes a real lively hope that I shall get the blessing, but I have it not yet.' Well, the Lord keep you waiting, keep you anticipating, maintain your hoping, give you diligence in seeking after Him, for you cannot seek in vain. If you cannot be satisfied without Him, He won't be satisfied without you. If you are lost enough to be willing to be saved by grace, you will prove one day the freeness of that grace, the sufficiency of that grace to save.

Our great danger is to be satisfied short, or to be turned aside from waiting for, or on, the Lord. Idolatry, the world, covetous desires, vanity - these things war against the soul, and the apostle told Timothy to eschew them. You cannot seek the Lord and indulge such things. You cannot seek the Lord while walking in vanity. And so it works both ways when this influence is on the heart. It separates from these things, and yet the poor sinner who is thus separated cannot say, when going to the Lord, 'Lord, I am so sanctified, I am so holy, I am so un-sinful, I am so good, therefore I hope in Thee to bless me.' He does not look at the separation, though it is effected in him. What he looks at is his needs, and oftentimes they are so deep that they amaze him; at his unworthiness, and that greatly depresses him; at his carnality, and that troubles him much; and at the temptations that are often assailing him; but under and with all these things he says, "My hope is in Thee." The Lord can overcome them all. Doubts he can overcome - resolve them all by His own blessed testimony; for when He speaks, the thing is done; when He comes to a soul and conveys to that soul a certainty, the whole world could not for the time being, nor hell itself, shake the certainty in that sinner's heart. We read in the

scripture of the full assurance of hope⁶ and the full assurance of understanding,⁷ and the full assurance of faith.⁸ These are the gifts of the Lord, to be waited for.

“My hope is in Thee.” And your rule of hope and expecting will be beyond your mere case; it will be according to the word of God. And when the word of God, the promises of the gospel, the declarations of the doctrines of grace, and the work and salvation of Christ, meet in your heart with your sense of need, you will know which is the greater. What God has provided will be seen to be greater than your need. More than all your need is in Christ. That makes hope lively; that kills despair; that enables you to ask with a mouth opened wide. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Ps. 81 v. 10). We ask very poorly often, because of our ignorance of the Lord. We may be almost pressed down with a sense of need and trouble, and yet ask but very little from the Lord, because we are so ignorant of Him. But when the Holy Spirit gives a little sight of the fulness of grace, and of the salvation that is in the Lord, we shall say just as did David, Soul, “hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

“And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.” First of all, I believe the centre of our hope, if it is real, solid, is in the finished work of Christ. That is the Rock upon which the believer stands hopefully. Upon that he stands, and feels when there that he cannot let the Lord go.

“I can no denial take,
When I plead for Jesus’ sake.”

(Newton; Gadsby’s Sel. 376)

When your faith is enabled to take hold of the sacred truth of the accomplished work of Christ, His precious, reconciling death, whereby He made atonement for sin everlastingly, expiated it for ever, and redeemed His people - when you can lay hold of that by faith, even although some of you may not yet have the satisfying witness that He died for you, yet the strength of it itself, laid hold of by faith, will enable you to say in your measure as truly as Jacob said it, “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” (Gen. 32 v. 26). And you will not let Him go until you are fully assured that when He said on the cross, “It is finished,” your sins were then ended, expiated, put away. That will be one thing you will wait for: nothing will finally put you off or satisfy you short of this. In the 32nd Psalm we are taught that this great blessing is sought for and obtained by every godly soul: “For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found” (Ps. 32 v. 6). “My hope is in Thee” for that.

Then you may sometimes look by faith upon the Lord Jesus as risen again and in heaven, and you may say, ‘Lord, “my hope is in Thee,” to intercede for me there.’ The intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ arises out of His precious death, His death giving, as it were, authority to His intercession on high. And His intercession on high for His poor people, as a result of His death for them upon the cross, is necessary. He “made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53 v. 12). Do you hope in that? For instance, when you feel unable to pray, when you feel you cannot reach the throne of God, when you feel that iniquities, trespasses, have separated between you and your God, when guilt makes you dumb, full of shame, and you are tempted to lie down in despair, in that shame what can you do? There is only one thing, and that only as the Lord helps: to lay hold of the Mediator, to lay hold of His intercession in heaven, and ask Him to open His mouth for you, to speak in heaven for you. There is a very blessed *reality* about

⁶ “We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb. 6 v. 11).

⁷ “all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God” (Col. 2 v. 2)

⁸ “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10 v. 22).

the intercession of Christ. I know there is a mystery connected with it; it *is* mysterious; it cannot be fully understood by any mortal; but that does not mean it is any less real. The will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you is the substance of the intercession of Christ in heaven. God's will is one. Christ expressed His will for His people, audibly expressed it, before He suffered and ascended on high. And what He asks for His people in heaven, interceding for them, is what He teaches His people their need of, and to desire. If *He* takes your case up, and presents it in the court of heaven, who suffered on Calvary, and is the Son of Man who came to save the lost; and who offered Himself a Sacrifice, and rose again and ascended on high for our justification - if *He* opens His mouth for you, if you can give Him your case, it will be well dealt with. "My hope is in Thee," an Intercessor before the throne, a Mediator. For we cannot approach God immediately; we must present our petitions; we must bring our desires; we must lay our cases out before God through and in Jesus Christ, that blessed way He has made through the veil, even the flesh of Jesus, an open way. A "living way," it is called in the Hebrews (Heb. 10 v. 20).

"My hope is in Thee." Do you find your hopes rising up to Him sometimes, and laying your case out, trusting in Him to bring it off well, mingling with your poor, broken prayers His infinite merit, pleading what He has done on your behalf?

"But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in glory now."

(Toplady; Gadsby's Sel. 117)

You will find yourself sometimes without any claim on God. You will have to tell Him, and do tell Him, perhaps oftentimes, that you have forfeited all claim on Him, but you come to Him on the ground of Christ's merit. And you come to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to intercede for you, to plead what He has done. Now you will expect something, and not in vain. If you are enabled to go thus, you will get near God; and when you get near God, something is done. To feel the Lord's presence in your own heart is to have peace; it is to have salvation. That word in the 42nd Psalm is very remarkable: "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." In the margin our translators have given us the alternative rendering, which I feel conveys a wonderful truth. In the margin the psalmist is made to say, "I shall yet praise Him whose presence is salvation." Now that is true. If you have God in your heart, if you have His peace in your conscience, if you are raised up to sit with Him "in heavenly places,"⁹ if you are enabled a little to enter into the enjoyment, only a little, of that reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, and to enter too a little into the union that there is between Christ and His Father, and between you and Christ, you will find perhaps it will not last long, but it is very sacred. While it lasts, you will find yourself carried up for a few moments by faith into the very heart of God: "I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me" (John 17 v. 23). I know that is very high; I know it is very sacred, but it is wonderful how a poor waiting sinner, who has nothing to hope in, none but God in Christ, gets occasionally a rich blessing. He is led into the sanctuary for a few moments, gets a little gleam, a little touch that makes a mark upon his spirit like a little foretaste of heaven; for the love of God in Christ Jesus surely is a foretaste of heaven. Do you pant for it? Do you sometimes say,

"Oh love divine, how sweet Thou art!

⁹ "God ... hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2 v. 6).

When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee?"

(C Wesley; Gadsby's 249)

Well, God is full of love. He has manifested that love and commended it to His people, in that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for their sins.¹⁰ And if you believe that, you will be waiting for the enjoyment of it; you will be looking for the Lord to come and bring into your heart by the Holy Ghost, as it is in Romans 5 verse 5: "Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Then what? You will hope still more! The more you have of heaven here, the heaven of forgiveness, the heaven of redeeming love, the heaven of the liberty of God's dear children, the more you will hope for. My friends, we are limited - extremely limited, some of us are, because our faith is so small. What will enlarge our faith? Knowledge.

"Faith is by knowledge fed."

(J Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 236)

One of our hymnwriters expresses a real truth when he says,

"The blessings from His death that flow,
So little we esteem,
Only because we slightly know,
And meanly value Him."

(J. Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 803i)

Do you wait for the knowledge of Christ? For Him to reveal Himself more clearly to you, to shine in your heart, to feast your soul and to be in you the hope of glory? There is one thing I have hoped for and waited for for years, and sometimes I am tempted to fear I shall die without ever attaining to it, and that is to come to that of the apostle's where he says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2 v. 20).

"My hope is in Thee," in Thy wisdom to guide me, in Thy power to defend me, in Thy grace to be my sufficiency, in Thy mercy to melt my hard heart, in Thy supplies in providence to be a sufficiency for my pilgrimage, and in the support of Thy presence and grace when I come down to the valley of the shadow of death. "My hope is in Thee," to land me safely with Thee in eternity, to save me to the uttermost; and "my hope is in Thee," to raise my body at the resurrection day and change it so "that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3 v. 21). My friends, this hope, the matter hoped for, goes into eternity and embraces all eternal blessedness. It is not stopped, it is not bounded by time; it goes into eternity. It includes time; and sometimes our time things, our present condition of soul, and the enemies with which we are surrounded, and the temptations by which we are assailed, seem to say we shall never get through. To get through is one of the chief things with us. But look out, poor sinner, children of the living God, waiters and seekers and hoppers in the Lord's mercy, look out for blessings. He will bring you through; He never will leave, never forsake, never fail His waiting and hoping people. He is faithful.

May the Lord help us to believe in Him and grant us a true knowledge of Himself. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish."

¹⁰ "Herein is love ... that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4 v. 10).