

SB
663
1368r
Lap 8/2

115
2/12/32

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday 24 August 1932

Hebrews 12 v 9

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

The chastisements of God form a part of His covenant dealings with His people. In the Psalms we read of the covenant and this: "If his children forsake My law and walk not in My statutes, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod and their iniquity with stripes." It is also written "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." The exhortation is to a son not to despise the chastening of the Lord nor faint when he is rebuked of Him. Chastisement then, thus viewed and felt, has a beautiful aspect though a painful feeling. It is a sign of sonship. One, not a son, may have affliction - indeed the whole world has affliction of some kind - but that is not chastisement. Chastisement is a dealing of God with a child of His and with a church belonging to Him, for instruction, for correction, and that the chastised person may be a partaker of God's holiness. Therefore chastisement should be regarded by us, if we be chastened, very tenderly and prayerfully. The Lord takes trouble with His children and the trouble is just this, that He will have them corrected when they are going astray, when they form errors of judgement or walk in things contrary to the will and the Word of God. He has revealed Himself as a Father in a spiritual relationship and the relationship of a Father to a son is one of union. That being so spiritually, God does chasten sons. Therefore may we, when under His chastisement, whether personal or collective have a heart given to us to regard His dealings with us. The relationship, natural relationship, between a father and a son, we see in the text, and that relationship led to, and warranted, chastisement. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us". They did it for their own pleasure or, as it seemed good and necessary, though they may have erred. Yes, parents of our flesh may have made errors in correction,

but, notwithstanding, we gave them reverence, submitted to them. Now, says the Apostle, using this striking illustration in the doctrine of divine chastisement, "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live". This sets before us several important things. First of all, chastisement, correction; a necessary thing. A child of God may get, very easily, if allowed, through sin, into such a state of mind as when correction first comes to be offended and to despise what he is told not to despise. He may think it hard to be dealt with as he is, but chastisement is necessary for several reasons. First, because the Father's love dictates it, inflicts it, seeing it to be necessary. You will never wander from Him, O people of God, without calling forth His jealous love, and He will lay on the rod as it pleaseth Him. In your right mind, you would not say, O let me never be chastised. Seeing it is a mark of sonship, the child of God will eventually thank his heavenly Father for the chastisement he has endured. That is a great reason. It may not be perceived at the first, but it is a great reason for chastisement. A wayward child calls for restraint. God, when His adulterous church went after other lovers and said that she would go after them, He built a hedge around her, and because of her determination to go after her lovers, He said that He would build a wall of hewn stones around her, so that she should not find her paths. This was not anger, but love. Love in His jealousy, love to the sinner, love to the sinning church, whom He would have come to Himself and be for Him alone and not another. The love of God will always bring this out wherever necessary. We have to believe, and do believe, that He does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, but it is clear in the Scriptures and it becomes a rich experience later in the soul, that the love of God dictates, brings forth chastisement. O you who are under His chastening hand - may we as a church under His chastising hand - recognise this. There is, where there is no tenderness of conscience, a great aptness to misconstrue chastisement and make of it hatred and read destruction into it. God will correct that error. O but when conscience accuses you of many sins and wanderings and then the hand of God comes on you to correct you and put you right, you are very apt, through unbelief and misreading of God's Book, of chastisement to say, this is against me, and I shall one day perish. But I say again, God will correct that error and make the chastisement useful as the rod and the voice of a

heavenly Father. Chastisement then is necessary from the love of God.

It is necessary, in the next place, for correction. Correction in the judgement, correction in the spirit, correction in respect of some inconsistency. We need putting straight. Lamé feet are quickly turned out of the way and erring minds need a statute, beyond the limits of which they may not go with impunity. Chastisement is needed to correct our spirits. We get light and vain and worldly and foolish and careless and sleepy and the Lord knows what we, when we are in a bad state, do not know about ourselves. The spirit of the Jews may be in a child of God in respect of some chastisement. I am not blind, I am not ignorant of the Scriptures. O God will open the eyes of such a child of His and show him how blind he has been, and blindly he has walked toward the world and stepped into a snare and how blindly and foolishly he has behaved in his spirit Godward, and this needs correction and God is the corrector. He does it by the Scripture, but correction must be given, it is given. Happy you who are not left without divine correction. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth". Ah, if we rightly, spiritually appreciated correction, we should often thank God for it. Though the pain be great, we should thank God for it. A rebuke from the Lord will enter into a wise man's conscience more than a hundred stripes will afflict the back of a fool. O, I say again, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth".

It is needful, in the third place, for instruction. Chastisement is for instruction. We must be instructed as to a wrong way in which we may be walking, as to a wrong spirit by which we even may look into the Word of God. Unfeigned things, God loves, and we naturally have many feigned things and God has to teach us the difference between these things. Unfeigned love is what He approves, and feigned love is hypocrisy and this, if in a child of God, He corrects. He instructs a person in the needs be of what is right and in the beauty of godliness. He teaches us by correction in temporal things, that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and sufficient also is the supply for the day; when an anxious mind runs forward and says, what shall I eat, what shall I drink, what will become of me in such and such events which may never happen to him. Instruction. Ah He may instruct you that you have been very formal in

your worship, that you have had little or no heart in prayer, that you have walked very lightly before God, that you have been deficient in humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God, that your conscience has become somewhat hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; that by that deceitfulness of sin you have departed from the living God; committed two evils, forsaken the fountain of living water, and hewed to yourself cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water; and a correcting rod will teach you these things. You have some little one, some Zoar - Spare it, is it not a little one? - and God's correction will teach you that it was a great thing to have something which He did not give you, a refuge which He had not made Himself for you.

Chastisement is needed, in the next place to draw us to the right point, and that is to the throne of God's grace, and to come to that throne in the way that the Scripture expresses it: Seeing then that we have such an High Priest as can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, let us come boldly. Mind that dear friends, the approach to the throne of grace with your poverty, weakness, backslidings, foolish ways and things, is not simply because you have done such and such things, but, first and foremost, and most important of all, is that there is a High Priest there. We have to go with poverty, we must go as backsliders very often, but all goings to the throne of grace must be, when real, when proper, when profitable, through the High Priest, and God's chastisement may just teach you that you have frequently gone, as you have thought, with your poverty, and your backslidings, and evils, and had no eye to the High Priest, and so you got no good. You asked, and asked in right terms perhaps, but not in faith, and therefore have received no answers.

And chastisement in the last place here may be that we may set our hope in God. Christ is set forth thus in the chapter which I read, that by Him we might believe in God and set our hope in God. Not an easy thing when you are under a chastising of God, but the cross of Christ will show you the way and attract you into the way and cause you to set your hope in God. Hope, lively, living hope; hope in the Redeemer; hope, cast as an anchor, into that which is within the veil wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Hope for help, hope

for sustenance, hope for profit, hope for a good end in and by Jesus Christ. God, the ultimate end of it.

We gave our earthly parents reverence. Look at this - "Shall we not much rather" - for a higher reason, a reason of another nature, a reason of an ineffable relationship, the relationship of a child, a son, to his Father - "Shall we not much rather be in subjection", or reverence, "unto the Father of spirits and live." This subjection is universal. Universal, that is to say, with respect to the person who is under the chastising hand of God. In one or two particulars I will endeavour to set this before you, according to Scripture. God's people are called; they have mercies shown to them, electing mercy, pardoning mercy, justifying mercy, sanctifying mercy, the mercy of being a people near unto God. And by these mercies, Paul, writing to the Romans, says: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12 v 1). The service which all these mercies render proper, reasonable, due to Him who has granted such mercies. How can the persons render themselves, for it is not simply the body but the person. How can sinful persons, children of God, with sin in them, present themselves holy, a sacrifice? You may feel you cannot do it, and certainly if the attempt to do it were made in nature and by nature's wisdom, so called, and nature's strength, it could not be done. But, writing to the Romans, the Apostle speaks of the offering up of the Gentiles as an acceptable sacrifice. How is this? Through Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is acceptable to God because of the Head. And when - with grace in exercise and faith in your heart, looking to, hanging on, depending alone on, the one offering of Christ, whereby He sanctified the people, and on His love - you go to God and present yourself; not only your soul, but your whole person, this is acceptable to God. No other way, as far as I know the Scriptures and as far as I know in experience. Paul says to the saints at Corinth - and to the saints at Galeed this evening - "Ye are not your own". A great word - "Ye are not your own". And further, to the same saints he says: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you". "Know ye not that your body is the temple of God". When you are rightly exercised, when you search yourself in the light of God's holy teaching by the Spirit, when the Spirit of judgement and

the Spirit of burning is within you, purging away the filth of your lusts and pride and vanity, and selfishness, and self-wisdom and self-strength, and you are brought as a poor, emptied, weak, foolish, confessing sinner, I apprehend that that is a presenting, as a living sacrifice, your body to God. Not giving yourselves to yourselves, not indulging wilfully and persistently those abominations which you perceive in your heart, but, by the power of the Spirit, sacrificing them as Paul speaks to the Romans: "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body". And what a wonderful subjection this is, when a poor creature, daily falling and realising in himself that there is no one sinner on the earth who does good and sins not, goes with all that, to God through Jesus Christ, and says, Lord take me, make me a son, make me a servant. In that I apprehend is the presenting of the body as a living sacrifice. I would live to God, I would live a life of faith on the Son of God. I would deny myself, and take up my cross and follow Christ. I would be His and walk as one of His only. I would leave the world and its vanities, and just be the Lord's. Live on Christ and to Christ and for Christ. And if I make not a mistake, I believe there are some hearing these words who will say, they are true respecting us. This is what we would do; we would obey the Holy Spirit in this word: Present your bodies a living sacrifice. Living sins in you; you say, Lord I would leave them. Self-will, Lord I would give it up. Self-direction, Lord keep me from it. Self-indulgence in anything, appetite, food, drink, clothing, everything, I would give all up that is wrong and contrary to Thy holy will. Subjection.

Secondly, subjection in the spirit. Subjection to chastisement in the spirit. When you are under His mighty hand to have grace to submit yourself to God and humble yourself under the mighty hand. No easy thing. It is not set forth in the Scripture as a harsh, harshly given task. It is a living, loving, gracious word from a blessed, compassionate High Priest, Jesus Christ. Humble yourselves, receive this from My hand. Take this token, a rod laying on a stripe which you painfully feel, receive this as a token of My love, as a sign of your sonship toward God and with Me. Do not you know what this means, when you are enabled to say, "Not as I will but as Thou wilt". Thus Paul was in subjection when he said that he would gladly bear and continue to have the thorn in the flesh; gladly be weak, as weakened

by that, and still more weakened in a sweet way by the grace of Christ. I would gladly have it and glory in it that the power of Christ might rest upon me. Only the people who know it understand the sweetness of it, the sacredness of it, the power of it, the sweet humility of it, the reality of it, the goodness of God in it, when the heart's will and choice are brought into the blessed, humble submission to God that is here expressed. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live".

Once more, is it not a sweet subjection to the Father of spirits when you can love Him in His dealings with you; when you can walk in that Scripture: "Delight Thyself also in the Lord". Nothing wrong in God, you say. There is nothing wrong in the rod, nothing wrong in the rebuke, nothing undeserved in the grief inflicted. God is right. I wish I lived this more, but the little I have lived in it enables me to say it to you. It is one of the sweetest things you can get when in affliction just to submit entirely to the Lord God. When prayer goes out to Him accompanying faith, for faith and prayer are united; never, never separated. When the prayer of faith heals your sick soul and perhaps your sick body too. When the prayer of faith lays hold of the sacrifice of Christ, relies on the mediation of Christ, and looks for good from no other source than Christ, that is being indeed in subjection.

Waiting on God in trouble is being in subjection to Him. That was not a spirit of subjection that moved the Psalmist to say: "Make haste O God". Faith says, His time is best. "All kind and all wise, Thy season is best", wrote Toplady. Yes, it is best. The will of God as it is perceived in affliction, a chastening, will become what Rutherford calls a bed in the fire. You can lie down in the will of God when you are in subjection to Him and the prayer of faith is going up to Him. Lord, help me to bear it; keep me from kicking and rebelling; keep me from trying to throw this away, to cast off this yoke; help me to take up my cross and follow Thee. Wait on God. There is one wonderful word about waiters on God. This - "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." They are ashamed of themselves, ashamed of their unbelief, ashamed of their hasty spirit, when they have said perhaps "All men are liars", ashamed as having said: "It is time for Thee Lord to work", but they are not ashamed of waiting. "I

waited for the Lord". And again one says, "I wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning" "Be in subjection". O searched sinner, O tried Christian, whom God may be searching as with candles, going into secret things and corners in your nature that you have not opened and would gladly keep closed and from His gaze, but you cannot, I say, wait on Him. This searching will lead to the discovery of much evil, but it will lead to a blessed emptying that there may be a filling out of the fullness of the Lord Jesus. God does nothing in vain. He does not chasten in vain. He has a definite end in affliction, in afflicting His people, a definite end which is expressed in the following verse. "That we might be partakers of His holiness"; that the image of the Lord Jesus may be more and more imprinted on the soul. This is not progressive sanctification of the flesh, but growth in grace, and further, and further, and yet further communications of grace made to the soul. Dear believing friends, may God give us grace to be in subjection to Him, remembering, believing that we are not our own. If ever He speaks that word to you you will find a singular power in it and a wonderful efficacy. Twice in my life He has said it to me, and I knew the power of it and the efficacy of it. You wont wish to live as if you were your own if God tells you in love that you are not your own. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live". A disobedient, gluttonous, drunken son who would not listen to the correction of his parents was to be taken by God's direction to the judges, and his wickedness, his gluttony, and his drunkenness told before them and the judges shall judge him and command him to be stoned. If we live and die disobedient, gluttonous, drunken sinners, not necessarily literally so, but in spirit, that is the end. A worldly man, a covetous man, a professor of religion who never knows what it is to be chastised in his heart, searched and tried, pleased with himself, such a man, if God stop him not, will be stoned, that is, he will die. His religion will die, his profession will prove a wrong thing. Now says Paul, we shall live if we are subject to the Father. If grace comes, mercy flows in, power is exerted in the heart and conscience, subjection will follow. Not as a meritorious thing, shall we live if we are subject, but this is the order of God; this is His manner of dealing. You wont buy life, but you will live according to God's order if, by divine grace, you are in subjection unto God. Rebels are

routed and destroyed. Children are saved and blessed. We are under chastening; we, as a church and congregation, we are under chastening. God has dealt very solemnly with us this year so far. He has removed two deacons from us by death, and beside, other members, and they died in the Lord. If you say, O well other churches suffer loss, why should not we? that will be despising, and the people of God are told not to despise the chastening of the Lord. If you say, we shall never get on now, that is fainting and we are told not to faint when we are chastened of the Lord. "If we endure chastening". This word "endure" is very beautiful, very important. Not, if you live through a trouble; not if you begin to philosophise about a trouble; not if you say, I will bear it as well as I can; that wont be enduring it. When you endure chastening you are in subjection, you are broken, humble, tender. You are fearful of being wrong. Yea. you may be saying to yourself, I am afraid I shall get nothing out of this; I shall gain nothing by it; Lord, forbid that. You will want gain by it. And what is it to gain by chastening? It is to live. What is it to live in this sense? It is to be under a sense of the favour of God. It is to feel that the sacrifice you make is acceptable to God; that He does not reject you; does not reject your humility and your humble offering of your poor heart; when you say, "Here's my heart, Lord take and seal it", and He does not reject it; does not reject your humble confidence in Him. Some people's confidences are rejected; not this one. Therefore my dear, tried brethren, let us as a little church and congregation pray that we may recognise God's hand in dealing, that we may deeply deplore anything in ourselves that may have provoked Him to deal with us as He has done, and that we may ask His tender pity and compassion on those who suffer more immediately and then on ourselves collectively. I would keep this before you. I am not speaking in a way to despairing of good, nor in a way of wishing to say God has forsaken us, but rather exhorting you, that you may be enabled, and that I may be enabled with you, to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. I have been very apt to say, what shall I do? You may be saying the same, what shall we do? This is the thing - may the Holy Ghost work it in us - "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him". Look to Him; there is a full Christ for an empty people, a mighty Christ for a weak people. "Able to have compassion on the

ignorant and on them that are out of the way". I would then commend this important Scripture, the whole of this chapter, to your prayerful consideration. There is much in it that is beautiful, tender, full of life and love, and if we have power, that is to say grace to notice it, we may gain a great deal. May the Lord enable us so to do.

AMEN.