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Sermon preached by Mr. J. W. Walder at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
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"The Lord trieth the righteous....." (Psalm 11:5)

In this Psalm we have set before us the two vastly different ways in which the Lord is pleased to deal with the righteous and with the wicked. In the few words which have been laid upon my mind to try and notice, we read that 'the Lord trieth the righteous.' but in another verse we read "upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest:" It will then be an inexpressible mercy and favour if we should be found among the righteous, those whom God tries and at times may try exceedingly, sorely and deeply, yet may we be given to see this is His favour toward them and His purpose for their good.

There is a very great difference between being tried and being destroyed, for in all dealings that God has with His people in the multitude of various trials that they must endure in their pilgrimage, God's purpose is not to destroy them, but to deliver them from that which would destroy them should He leave them to those ways which are not good.

Seeing that there is this character mentioned, the righteous, we must attempt first to try and find out who these persons are, for they are not such as are esteemed so in the sight of man, but those who are so in the sight of God. Truly every one of them, when the Spirit is pleased first to quicken them into life and to convince them of their sin, feel to be anything and everything but a righteous person. They smite upon their thigh and say: woe is me, I am wretched, undone, ruined and a lost sinner, I am not righteous, yet God has spoken in His word of persons who are found accepted by Him and righteous in His sight.

In that terrible and awful day of wickedness that the earth witnessed in Noah's day, we read this: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." (Genesis 6:8) God Himself said of this favoured character, the possessor of God-given faith: "Thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1) So then there are those whom God terms a righteous character and upon whom He looks as being accepted and acceptable in His sight, having found grace and being favoured and blessed with an interest in the work of Jesus Christ, all of which, not a part, but the whole, being accomplished on the behalf and account of poor sinners. So that these persons indeed are complete in Him, righteous in Him.

Among these righteous persons was the dying thief; one of them, not both of them, was a righteous character, and it could indeed be said of him that his righteousness was of God imputed, for he had no good works to plead, neither could he promise any to come. He was on the verge of eternity and had lived and practised an ignominious existence, and yet he was a righteous man made so through the merit, worthiness, righteousness and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The publican was another of these characters, not the Pharisee; no, he was condemned, but the publican was justified: "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other:" (Luke 18:14) so he was among the righteous.

Now it may indeed be a very great concern, anxiety and exercise with us as to whether we are among these people manifestly. The righteous shall be known in the first and the more feeble manifestation of it in the heart, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to impart to them the new nature; they are born again by the Spirit and it is by reason of this that they do so feel and do so mourn over their ungodliness, their guilt, their sin. This is the possession of a nature that is bestowed of God, a righteous nature that is manifest and felt, not something talked about, spoken about, read about. It is something possessed anew that their heart feels, on account of which they are conscious of their unholiness and their unrighteousness in thought and word and deed, so that they do in reality and truth hunger and thirst after righteousness which none but a righteous man ever did, ever can or ever will. Only those who are righteous, as made so by God, will earnestly desire, seek after and wait for that righteousness which God has promised.

They are comfortable words in Isaiah's prophesy regarding those who are seeking this righteousness, for God said: "I bring near my righteousness" (Isaiah 66:3), and they that seek it shall obtain it. Can we honestly say that the Holy Spirit has taught us and mercifully delivered us from every vestige of a hope of righteousness in ourselves, so that we have been brought to this point in experience:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name. (Gadsby's 1106)*

We are not going about seeking to establish our own righteousness but have fled to Christ for help and deliverance, being leprous souls, of whom Hart speaks, fleeing to the blessed Son of God that we might obtain that righteousness of Him which is acceptable in the sight of God. The humbled soul waits for righteousness and peace and longs for that day to come when they can truly say: "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Now these are the persons whom God terms righteous; there are none so by nature. We have all gone astray speaking lies from the womb, born in sin, shapen in iniquity, none righteous, no not one, but there are those good men spoken of by the hymnwriter:

*Good men there are; but, be it known,
Their goodness dwells in Christ their Head! (Gadsby's 538)*

These are the persons whom the Lord tries. Now we must conclude that this experience of theirs is consistent with His unerring wisdom and faithfulness and goodness, both for the demonstration of His own glory as well as for the good and establishment and strengthening eventually of this tried character. It is surely safe to say that not one of these tried people cherish the trial. It is painful, it is distressing, but, my friends, it is so much better to be tried than to be deceived; so then it is none other and no less than the Lord Himself Who thus deals with the righteous. It is His own cherished prerogative to accomplish this purpose in His people's experience; the trying of the righteous.

There are a number of different matters to notice in regard to this trying of the righteous. They are, and they must be in their little measure, a possessor of a certain degree of experience in spiritual things. They are not absolutely destitute of the "something known and felt." They must be, and certainly are, possessors and partakers of God's grace in the principle of it and in all the various

activities of the different ways in which grace is spoken of and experienced, which every righteous character possesses in their measure. They may feel it is very small, very small indeed, but if it is real it will be tried, as the hymn writer says: *'grace, though the smallest, shall surely be tried.'* (Gadsby's 297) so that from the very commencement of an experience which is of God, to the termination of that experience, the work of grace carried on and perfected within, will be tried all the way, not a part of it, but all the way. It is a lifetime of being tried where the righteous are concerned. There is not one of us who are fit from any point of view to sit in judgment upon our own case, feelings, exercises and thoughts and come to a right conclusion about them. Hence I believe that it was on account of this that the Psalmist was convinced that he could not come to any right conclusion in himself or of himself concerning his own heart or ways, but he desired the Lord would do it for him, and prayed in the 139th Psalm: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me," do not let me deceive myself; do not let me be deceived; do not let me go wrong, do not let me settle on anything short. I want to be righteous, I want to be right in Thy sight now and I want to be right for eternity.

Now it is in the trial of the righteous that there is that accomplished which sometimes we pray for, a proving of things, a testing of things, a manifestation of their reality and their sterling quality. You know among men we never hear of a person seeking to counterfeit a valueless matter or thing. They would be foolish and wasting their time; men only seek to counterfeit something that is really valuable and precious; and so it is spiritually. Satan does not waste his time in seeking to counterfeit something that is worthless. He will try and copy that which is valuable, and it is in this trying of the righteous that there is a separating of the silver from the dross and the gold from the dross:

*Gold in the furnace tried
Ne'er loses aught but dross;
So is the Christian purified
And bettered by the cross. (Gadsby's 872)*

Now if you know anything of this experience God is dealing with you in a gracious manner, He is dealing with you as one who is righteous in His sight because it is the righteous He tries. It does not say He tries the wicked; it says He destroys the wicked. Well then from the very commencement of our experience to the end there will be this succession of trials for the righteous.

I want to try and look at it a little noticing first the character himself and then the grace that he possesses as given him of God. Do we know what it is, have we known what it is, to read God's Word and have read where God has given a faithful description of such a character as Ahithophel and we have said; I am afraid that is me, I have got every mark and every characteristic which that man possessed and I feel I am no better. How does it affect us? Can we rest in such a state in our thoughts as this? O, the Lord tries the righteous! He sometimes makes them feel that they are no better than the worst and causes them deep exercise and to be tried exceedingly. Am I no better, is there anything in me? Am I right? Has God done anything for me for eternity? O, it causes prayer before God. What a wonderful thing if by and through and in the trial the Lord is pleased to prove, demonstrate and manifest that there is something different, there is something real, something that He has wrought, something that He will accept, for God accepts His own work in a sinner's heart.

Have we ever looked at that solemn and awful character, Judas? The eleven disciples did not suspect him, they trusted him with the money, he had the bag, they never dreamt he was a robber, and we know very well how far he went in religion, and has not this case caused more than one of us to tremble and fear and be in great distress lest we should be found to be no better? O, this is the way the Lord tries the righteous, He puts them to the test and causes their hearts to be in real earnest for the witnessing of His own Spirit with their spirit, for nothing less than God's witness will do in such a trial as this. O, they say, do tell me, do tell me whether I am right or wrong. Make me right and keep me right! Do not let me be deceived.

But not only is there the trial of the righteous in regard to their character and their state, but there is the trial of every grace. Now what a constant and severe trial the faith of God's people has to endure. I suppose that we might say that Abraham had as much faith as most, and the greater degree of this grace the greater the trial. Abraham's faith was tried most sorely, for that which God had promised him came into a season of impossibility, and it was so far as the skill or power or help of man was concerned; so that Abraham's faith was in the fire sorely and severely tried over many years, but his faith, being of God, did not fail. Neither did the principle of that indestructible faith given to the apostle Peter fail in his trial: 'the Lord trieth the righteous.' There was plenty of rubbish in Peter's heart, there was plenty that was of the flesh and that did not stand the trial, that soon proved to be what it was; but the faith that God gave him did not fail. The Lord Jesus Himself said: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:31-32) It was tried but it did not fail. Now 'the Lord trieth the righteous.'

I suppose we might say that Job and his patience are proverbial. He had a good measure as given him by God, not a natural patience, but the grace of patience, but O how it was tried I tried very severely and over a long period. We read in James of the patience of Job and the long-suffering and goodness of the Lord (James 5:11), and that the end of Job was better than the beginning. Now, you see, that patience was proved to be God-given because it enabled Job to endure the trial and there were times, once or twice in that fiery trial, when that good man of God, a righteous man, triumphed, for he said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15) and again he said: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth." (Job 19:25) O his faith did not fail, nor his patience. It was God given, but it was a tried faith and it was a tried patience. 'The Lord trieth the righteous.'

So, my friends, none who know the trial need conclude that they are not one of these characters. That is no proof; but if they are tried it is proof of experience and grace which is of God.

There may also be many other occasions of trial; the trial of obedience. God has appointed a path, a race that is set, fixed; a way that He has determined His people shall go in regard to their spiritual exercise or in regard to their providential pathway. Is the path of obedience an easy one? Do God's people never meet with obstructions, difficulties, impossibilities? Is not this a trial to their obedience whether they will continue in the way which God has appointed or whether they will turn aside and whether they will forsake the Lord and his ways as many of those who appeared to be disciples did? They went back and walked no more with Him. Why they could not have possessed a principle of life or grace or they would not have done such a thing. The Lord Jesus said to the few who continued with Him; "Will ye also go away?" and O what an answer Peter gave: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:67-68)

*Depart from Thee? 'tis death, 'tis more;
'Tis endless ruin, deep despair! (Gadsby's 927)*

You see obedience is tried; it is a tried obedience. There are difficulties, burdens, obstacles which try the righteous. But what does God's Word say concerning His own? "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronge." (Job 17:9)

There are times when God is pleased to try that principle of love which He gives to His people; and there are many trials in regard to this, particularly and especially that which arises from within our own hearts. The old nature, the carnal mind, is so full of bitter enmity and this is indeed at times a trial to that grace, that sweet grace of love. Huntington, when he was in the midst of such a trial as this, spake those words which may appear to those who have no understanding of it or no experience of it, a great and unintelligible paradox, but what does the good man say about it? He said, 'I hate the God I love.' There were the two natures, the one opposed to the other, bitterly opposed, and this was a trial: 'the Lord trieth the righteous.'

Now in regard to any particular exercise of heart, and that which we might be much tossed about, concerning our position or our pathway, we may be very tried. Is it of God? Am I mistaken, have I quite mistook the way? Am I a deceived character? this is very trying is it not? 'the Lord trieth the righteous.' Everything he does is tried. I remember myself, many years ago when I was in a deep exercise concerning the Lord's will, which I felt convinced in my own heart about, and I was very, very tried regarding prevailing circumstances. I went to Chapel one evening begging and begging all the way there that the Lord would speak a word to me to confirm me in the right way, and if I was deceived to make it very plain to me. I had the answer to my poor petition in the first hymn, nothing else in the service, but in the first hymn. It was the one which begins: *It is the Lord ...* (Gadsby's 261) and I had no further doubt as to the way, but it was tried; 'the Lord trieth the righteous.'"

Well, there is so very, very much that might be said regarding this, it is the Lord that does it, He does not make a mistake, He sees the need for it according to His eternal purposes; it is dealt in weight and measure and it will accomplish the end that He designs. The righteous, those who truly are so, will be confirmed by passing through the trial of faith, love, patience and obedience. They will be tested, proved, tried and found to be of God and real.

I cannot go on much longer but just to drop one last thought regarding this. God is pleased to use such a multitude of various means as sanctified to this end and purpose. The Word of God speaks of some things being tried as by fire; and all that will not stand the fire will be consumed: "Every man's work shall be made manifest.....because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Corinthians 3:13) Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble will be proved by fire. There are trials in circumstances, spoken of as waves and billows:

*They may on the main of temptation be tossed;
Their sorrows may swell as the sea. (Gadsby's 350)*

a watery trial, billows and waves. There may be afflictions of soul, afflictions of mind, afflictions of body, afflictions in circumstances, trials, trying things, things that sorely try faith and patience and they are all the accomplishment of God's purposes. 'The Lord trieth the righteous.' This is born out in the experience of every one that we read of in the Holy Word of God; they knew the trial and they

eventually knew the triumph and it is the righteous that the Lord trieth: "but the wicked and him.that loveth violence His soul hateth."

May we be among the righteous though tried. May we be among those characters with whom God deals graciously and effectively and profitably; that we may be brought to that place which He has prepared for, and promised to, the afflicted of His people: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-3)

The Lord add His blessing.

Amen.