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4. Hills Melting Like Wax

Sermon preached by Mr J W Walder at Galeed Chapel Brighton on 20th July 1988

“The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.” Psalm 97:5

The Holy Spirit has been pleased to use the illustration of mountains and hills in the Word of God, in some places particularly, to set before us as a figure and an illustration those things which are impossible to us; those things which appear to be so stable and solid and difficult to our feelings, that none other than the Lord himself can cause them to dissolve or, as we have in our text, melt like wax at his presence. They are things which we cannot circumvent; they are things which we cannot scale; they are things which we cannot escape and they are things which we cannot by our own ability remove. They are formidable things, things impossible, things that are so hard and difficult that they stand and will remain as they are until the Lord is pleased to visit with his presence and his saving power and his grace to cause these hills to melt as wax.

In the chapter we read together we have that blessed promise: “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.” (Isaiah 40:4) This wonderful matter is attributed alone to the power, mercy, goodness and grace of God.

Let us look a little at these hills, which are figurative of those impossibilities and difficulties which the living people of God must inevitably know, experience and encounter; both in the first part of their experience and throughout their earthly career. In some measure, more or less, they will encounter and come to these hills and mountains which cannot be escaped but which have been proved by God's people in all ages, and still is being proved by them, that they melt like wax at the presence of the Lord. They do indeed; and this is at times a most sweet, precious and blessed experience, for the difficulty is quite removed by the goodness, loving-kindness, mercy and power of the Lord.

First we will look at that which is most important and should indeed concern us the most—the matter to do with our soul's salvation and eternity. What a most woeful, dreadful, awful case, state and condition we are all in by nature, being the fallen sons and daughters of Adam. The Word of God most aptly, truthfully and thoroughly describes the nature, character, state and condition of every man and woman by nature; and that nature and all to do with it is like these impossible hills so far as any ability is concerned, or any power, persuasion, threatening or judgements or other thing that might be used as to any effect that they might have upon the heart. There is the impossible hill, the high peak of awful enmity. Who can cause this to flow down, to begin to melt, to give and to move but the powerful and gracious visit of the Lord in his purpose of salvation toward the poor sinner? Every man walketh in the pride of his nature, and who can humble him? Can any threatening or judgement? Can the greatest declared mercy touch the proud heart of man and cause it to melt and soften? Can the best of creatures or the most persuasive of persons or the most dreadful threatening move the heart one iota? No, the heart is as full of pride and enmity as it can be. Nothing can move it, nothing can melt it. Just so it would have remained, and should have remained, except and unless the Lord in his infinite mercy comes to us with his sacred presence, felt or not by us, realised or not by us, and visits us with salvation and causes these hills to melt like wax at his presence. That heart that is by nature hard, proud, obdurate and full of unbelief and atheism and enmity cannot be moved. There is one thing very, very certain and that is this—we cannot change our own hearts, we cannot soften our own hearts, we cannot remove these great hills and obstacles and difficulties that are upon us through the fall. But they melt like wax when the Lord comes. We may look at that a little more closely presently, for what a difference was made in the character and ways, thoughts and desires of such persons who were hardened in sin, as Manasseh, the dying thief, the publican and others; O, those hearts melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.

Now, my friends, this is the chief observation on the text. Has the Lord, in his mercy, done this for us? Has he come and visited with his presence and all that attends that presence? Has he been pleased to

exercise his grace, mercy, power, love and goodness with a gracious influence so that we have been given a heart of flesh, a feeling heart, a heart that melts, a heart that has been humbled within us, a heart that has been broken, made penitent and tender instead of that heart of stone that is ours by nature? This is a dreadful obstacle, but the hills melt at his presence, at such a visitation. The blessed effect of the gracious power and visitation of the Lord, immediately the hills melt in the feelings of the person who is affected.

What other hills may rise, that we cannot move? One is a hill, or we may say a range of hills—sin and guilt. O, as we look at it and as we view this range of hills, there are the particular high peaks. There are particular peaks that point up to the heavens, peaks of guilt and sin committed, which are great obstacles. There is another mountain or hill and that is the mount of Sinai, that great hill that is so foreboding and forbidding, so terrible to a wretched, ruined, hell-deserving sinner. I believe we have words similar to this in Judges: “The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.” (Judges 5:5) We cannot possibly circumvent or scale, escape or get round or free from that hill of Sinai. The thundering and the lightening, the curse and the condemnation is a great hill in our feelings.

There is also the hill of the workings of our own fearful, unbelieving, infidel hearts which we cannot move. Some of God’s people labour under this feeling for some considerable time. It is an experience which they cannot possibly find any relief or any deliverance from until the Lord is pleased to visit them with his sweet and precious presence and manifest himself as the Friend, Saviour and Deliverer of sinners.

We can conceive the feeling of some under this teaching in regard to the greatness of the mountain or hill of their sin as felt, their guilt as felt, which seems to be such a tremendous barrier and hindrance and separating influence between their poor souls and a holy and eternal God. But in due season they will be brought to prove that the hills melt like wax at the presence of the Lord. He can remove these hills, he can cause them to flow down, to dissolve, to be quite and completely removed by the influence and power of his sweet visitation and manifested love and mercy.

A little further in regard to spiritual experience throughout the life of an exercised believer. He will recurrently feel and find such things rising up within him; such hills, such mountains that he cannot possibly overcome or remove himself. Just one or two of these. Perhaps the greatest difficulty, the greatest hill, the most frequent one that is felt by God’s people is unbelief when it prevails. It is such a mountain or such a hill; can we remove it? It is far beyond our power, it is so strong, it is so stable, it laughs at our attempts to overcome it, we cannot get round it or over it or escape from it, and there it stays and remains in our poor hearts with all its wretched and evil effects. O, what a dreadful thing it is for a child of God to feel this unbelief! He is plagued by it, afflicted by it, distressed by it, brought into bondage by it; it is his grief and affliction. But do what he may and try as he will and struggle and labour and strive, he cannot remove this mountain of unbelief. But O, when the Lord comes, at his presence it soon melts like wax.

There are times when our poor hearts may be tossed and tortured by awful rebellion. This is a dreadful, hateful spirit to a child of God. He truly mourns and cries over his sin, the evil of it, the wickedness of it, but how can he remove it? He cannot remove it; the more he tries the hill seems to rise higher, he cannot obliterate it, and self-pity appears amid these painful circumstances. O, there may be times when he is well-nigh overwhelmed and overcome by this dreadful rebellious spirit, and he cannot remove it. It is an obstinate, obdurate, immovable hindrance; and that quite puts him to the test. Do what he will and may, he cannot move it.

There is sometimes the great rising hill of fresh feelings and thoughts of infidelity. Only those who are the subject of it know what a painful thing it is and how often and frequently they are plagued by it. We have got infidel hearts which discredit, disbelieve and question everything to do with God, everything to do with the Bible. Our infidel heart is too formidable, it is so strong, that nothing can cause it to dissolve, flow down, melt or be removed but the visitation of the Lord. O, it is an awful thing to be so assailed as to discredit one’s own experience, to discredit the Word of God, to discredit the very being of God, to have awful questionings as to whether there really is such a thing as a soul and eternity. It is all called into question. These are awful mountains, dreadful hills, and who can remove them or cause them to dissolve but the Lord himself; but the hills melt like wax at the presence of the Lord. I hope and believe that there

have been times and seasons when this has been sweetly proved in experience. O, what a difference it makes when the Lord is pleased to come and to make his presence felt.

But we will leave those things which concern the soul—O, there are plenty of difficulties, plenty of mountains, plenty of hills, plenty of things we cannot touch, we cannot move, we cannot possibly cause to dissolve and melt away—this is for the Lord to do for us.

Now to come to lower things. Doubtless all of God's exercised people have their insurmountable difficulties, one thing or another, something that to them is a formidable obstacle and difficulty—a hill, something which they cannot touch themselves, something which they cannot escape from, something which the Lord will not suffer or permit them to circumvent or find another way in which to walk. No, it must be met, it is impossible for us to scale it or go over it, but we must come to it and by this prove and know by experience that the hills melt like wax at the presence of the Lord. That same God, who has appointed for us the insurmountable difficulty, is he who alone can remove the difficulty and make a way for us when there appears no way; when the path may appear to be completely closed up or stopped by reason of this insurmountable difficulty.

As it is in nature, so it is in the experience of God's people in regard to these matters. We see a mountain or a hill a long way off sometimes and we are quite certain that we must draw nearer to it as time goes on, it must be met. You know as you get closer to a hill the bigger it gets; not really so, but in our conception it does. When we come to its foot it obliterates everything else, it is all we can see, and our thoughts and feelings are completely taken up with this great, insurmountable difficulty. We cannot see anything else, it fills our horizon. This is our experience when the Lord is pleased for good and wise ends to suspend his influence, sensible assistance and help, and Satan comes. This enemy is very adept at making mountains out of molehills, and is still very clever at it now. How often we have proved that Satan can magnify a difficulty beyond all proportion and certainly and truly make a mountain out of a molehill. In what way shall we find help, deliverance or relief but by the Lord's visitation, by his coming to our help and for our deliverance.

These hills then, the providential and circumstantial ones which include such a multitude of different circumstances, affect God's people. In the paths of some in the Word of God there were mighty influential and jealous persons who stood as an obstacle; a difficulty. They are more mighty, powerful, stronger and more formidable than the poor, feeble, tried, weak, troubled child of God, and that presented an insurmountable difficulty.

There may be certain trials or afflictions of body or circumstance which we see are inescapable. They must come, some great difficulties, and these are magnified and grow larger and larger and fill our whole hearts with great fear and dismay, and we are ready to conclude we shall never stand the trying day. It is a great mountain of difficulty. But we find in God's Word that this has been the pathway of the exercised people of God throughout their pilgrimage—one thing after another, one difficulty after another.

I do not know, but there may be someone who thinks and feels and says that their present hill of difficulty is the worst and the greatest that they have ever met with yet. They will confess and admit quite truly and rightfully that the Lord has helped them thus far. He has moved many difficulties in the past. He has caused many hills to melt like wax in past experience, but there has never been anything quite like this. This is different; there are symptoms, signs, evidences about this that seem to be so peculiar and so insurmountable; this is the one in which they think they will not find deliverance. O, but you see, God has promised his people: "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." (Job 5:19) "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (Psalm 34:19) Not ninety-nine, not one hundred, but out of them all.

We will try and look then at the deliverances, the helps, the remedies in such situations as I have tried very briefly to note.

First, as we may observe it in the fundamental and essential consideration of it. 'The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.' Well, what is this presence of the Lord but the visitation of God for the salvation of his people? It is essentially the incarnation of the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us. That amazing, wonderful, glorious, needful and essential condescension of the Son of God to come down into this world, to become incarnate and to accomplish the great, glorious, sufficient and perfect work of salvation and redemption, that the high hills of sin, guilt, law, curse, condemnation and death may melt

like wax at his presence. O, how wonderful this visitation, this glorious stoop and condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ when he came into this world! He is 'God with us.' "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" (2 Chronicles 6:18) Indeed he will and he has. O, what a most amazing and wonderful truth and fact this is, that God has sojourned with men, the Son of God has come down into this world, and all these hills and all these mountains have melted like wax at his presence, at his visitation. O, he has effectually, essentially and fundamentally removed these mountains, come over them, skipped upon them. The Word of God proclaims this as cause for rejoicing: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." (Isaiah 52:7) "Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." (Song of Solomon 2:8) And that is to be applied to the Lord Jesus. It is he that cometh skipping over the hills and over the mountains. It is then that "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" (Isaiah 40:4)—by and through the merit, worth, sufficiency and efficacy of his precious finished work. He has satisfied Sinai's demands, fulfilled the law, he has shed his precious blood to atone for sin. He has satisfied all the demands of justice. He has conquered sin, death, hell and the grave. He has removed mountains and that great hill which every one of us must soon meet with, that is death. What a hill that is! What an obstacle when it is contemplated and realised and felt, what a mountain! But even that, at the presence of the Lord will melt like wax, but only by the presence of the Lord.

How many mountains have we got? How many things to us are as mountains? How many things are hills? I want to look at this in the experience of it. We have looked at the fundamental part, the presence of the Lord Jesus coming down into this earth and the hills melting like wax. But now, what of it in our personal experience? When this precious Saviour visits a sinner, makes his presence realised, known and felt, when he comes himself and manifests himself to a poor, trembling, sinful soul, he does not come alone. He brings with him and dispenses and makes known his love, his grace, his power, his blood and righteousness, his kindness, pity and compassion. He is pleased to make these things known and felt. And when his sweet and sacred presence is thus felt in a poor sinner's heart, then where are the mountains? Where are the hills? They melt like wax at his presence. O, when Jesus visits our hearts with his mighty love, when he is pleased to manifest the efficacy and power of his precious blood and righteousness, where are Sinai and its threatening then? Where are the mountains of sin then? Where are our fears then? They all melt like wax when his presence is sweetly felt.

Now, do we know something of this? Has this precious Saviour visited our troubled hearts? Has he made his presence known to us? Has he shed abroad his precious love in our hearts? Has his blood been applied to our conscience? Have the hills melted like wax and flowed down at his presence? The hills and the mountains which we could not touch ourselves or move ourselves, are now completely removed. When Christ is pleased to visit a poor sinner who is troubled and distressed with the workings of unbelief, atheism, rebellion and infidelity, and makes his presence felt, manifests his love, influence and grace, and communicates mercy, O, what an immediate effect there is! This is the precious antidote to and deliverance from the awful workings of unbelief, pride and rebellion. That which may have continued upon our spirit for a considerable period now melts like wax. A prayerless, unbelieving, hard, worldly spirit begins to remove. Have there not been times when we have been amazed and surprised at the unexpected melting and softening felt within? There have been times in my experience when I have really wondered whether I should ever feel any softness again, after feeling so hard for so long, yet how sweet and how precious it is when there is a little melting! This can only be accomplished, this can only be felt, by reason of the visitation of the Saviour with power, grace, love and blood. How much this is needed and how frequently it is needed! What a wonderful mercy if we have felt such a visitation to our souls, such sweet presence as experienced by Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, the dying thief upon the cross, and that sweet character Mary who was found at Jesus' feet. So it was among the many characters in the Word of God. We see that when Christ comes in his saving power, immediately the hills melt; obduracy, indifference, coldness, hardness, pride and unbelief begin to give way. Nothing else can do it, but this can and does, and still does where the Lord is pleased to visit. It is our mercy if he has so come to us.

Now just for a few moments, the hills in regard to temporal and circumstantial matters. These mountains that are about us, these things which appear such a mountain to us, they melt at the presence

of the Lord. Can we not go back to a few instances in our little experience already where we have had to encounter a high hill, such a mountain, and it has indeed been a real mountain to us, and has continued immovable, inescapable, something which we could not possibly move ourselves? Then, when the Lord has been pleased to appear for our deliverance, the hills have melted like wax at his presence.

Have there been one or two seasons when you have almost been surprised at yourself at the strength and the enabling granted? You could hardly believe that you could encounter such a difficulty with such confidence and consolation and be brought through all the trials so completely and blessedly. This is to be ascribed only and alone to the supporting, upholding, comforting, delivering presence of the Lord who has caused our hills to melt like wax when he has come. They have remained formidable to us until he has come and we have proved that “the angel of his presence saved them...” (Isaiah 63:9)

It is a wonderful encouragement to have had some past experience in regard to this matter, that we may be enabled to wait upon the Lord in our present difficulties and hope for his help and deliverance. I remember an experience of mine many years ago when I was faced with a similar thing as this. It was coming on for a long time. It did not appear suddenly. I could see it in the future, and as the days grew closer my heart got quite fearful and the difficulty greater until the day arrived, and I never thought I should come through it. But that very morning such a spirit of prayer was given, and such a sweet hope and trust in the Lord, and such blessed confidence in him—none in myself, but in him—that I felt so confident of the issue that even the confidence frightened me, I thought I was too confident. But, you know, when the moment came to deal with that matter for which I was totally unfit and unsuitable in myself, it just melted like wax, there was no difficulty at all. My fears were groundless, the mountain had been exaggerated, and this sweet deliverance, gracious help, and confidence were by reason of this one thing, ‘the presence of the Lord.’ Now we may not always feel that as we would like to feel it, but is there not a secret prop, an unseen hand, that glorious power that holds all things up? Does he not cause the hills to melt, those things that seem they can never be moved, do they not dissolve? Ah, when the Lord is pleased to come and cause our hearts to feel his presence, his love and his power then we can say:

*In thy presence I am happy;
In thy presence I'm secure;
In thy presence all afflictions
I can easily endure.*

(Gadsby's 1101)

How is it when the Lord is absent? Then the mountains are great enough and the difficulties formidable enough. But when he comes, ah, when he comes, his presence melts our hearts and softens our spirits, our sins are removed, our guilt is gone, our unbelief is driven away, the difficulties dissolve and all the glory, majesty and praise must be ascribed unto this precious Saviour, the Friend of sinners, that blessed Emmanuel who is ‘God with us.’

Well, if any have a mountain or hill within, a mountain or hill without, in providence or circumstance, whatever it is that you feel is a mountain or hill to you, may you be enabled to wait upon the Lord for his help, for the hills still melt at his presence. O, may there be a proving of his power, goodness, love, kindness and salvation so that all the mountains and the hills shall be made low and that the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Amen.

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