

Sermon preached at Hope Chapel, Shaw's Corner, Redhill,
by Mr. L. S. B. Hyde on Friday, 17th March, 1989, at a service of thanksgiving
on the occasion of the Open Day of the Redhill Bethesda Flatlets

Text: "I will work, and who shall let it?" (Isaiah 43. 13.)

As we gather today for thanksgiving, it is possible for thanksgiving to be unacceptable to God because there is an interweaving of hypocrisy and partiality. That will not be so if our attention is focused upon the work of God and the continuance of that work in our consideration this afternoon. Thinking over the getting on for forty-five years in respect of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund, I believe we shall be able to put our finger upon various spots during those years and will be able to write, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Again and again, even in the face of much opposition at times, yet God's work has proceeded, and we can say surely with regard to the work of the Bethesda Fund that it is continuing by the power of the almighty God. If we observe the work of God, then our view of things will be to the glory of God.

"I will work, and who shall let it?" There are two principal points in these words. First, "I will work." So we look at God's work. And then, "Who shall let" - or hinder - "it?" is the opposition to the work of God? Now whenever God's work is to be seen, there is invariably opposition to that work being performed. We can look at this in a number of points in regard to our own lives, in regard to our spiritual lives, in regard to our church lives, in regard to our business lives, if we run them in the fear of God, and in regard to our domestic lives. How good it is, and it will fill our thoughts with thanksgiving this afternoon, if we are able to say, "This is what I have seen: 'I will work.' And this is what I have seen: 'Who shall let - or hinder - it?'" I am sure there are many here this afternoon who will be able to look into their own lives and to see God's work but only proceeding in the face of many hindrances. We are thankful to be witnesses to God in this. "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe Me and understand that I am He; before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. Yea, before the day was I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand." How good it is and uplifting when our minds are directed away from ourselves, away from all our problems and all our difficulties, to see the mighty God sitting on no precarious throne nor borrowing leave to be. That word of Dr. Watts has often been a comfortable one to me:

"Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While Thy eternal thought moves on
Thy undisturbed affairs."

Despite all the determination of the devil, despite all the determination of the world, yet God's work continues. Blessed be God that it is so.

Now first of all, in respect of these first three words, "I will work," this is a definite word. It is a word which comes within the compass of what we call the "I wills" of God. "I will work." And God's work sometimes takes place in very mysterious places. God's work is seen in very dark places at times. When the Lord spoke in His teaching, He said that there are but twelve hours in the day when man can work, but the darkness and the light are both alike to God. He is not prevented from working even by the darkness and dark scenes that may appear on the horizon and may envelop us sometimes. God continues His work. If you are amongst those who sit in darkness and have no light, yet surely you will hear - and blessed be God if you do - "I will work." We have

in the same prophecy, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord," because that name is an almighty name, an all-prevailing name. "I will work." How often do we have to prove that God will not have our work amongst His work, and so sometimes our work is brought to confusion in order that His work might be performed. I remember a good man who tried to set at rights two people that were against one another, and he kept trying, and the more he tried, the worse things got. He told me this himself, but he said, "When I stopped trying, then God started working." There is a lot to be said in that and I saw the issue myself, so I know that God started working, but not whilst someone else was trying to put things right.

"I will work." So God's work is an eternal work, and therefore it is not a work that can be in any way interfered with by anything that takes place in time. Now sometimes it appears to us that this and that is setting back God's work. Do you see it sometimes, when certain things happen and your soul is at stake and you desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and suddenly something comes and it seems to demolish everything? But God says, "I will work, and all your weakness will not prevent My work being performed." God's work is an everlasting work, and if we are blessed with the grace of God in our own souls, then we shall know something about God's work, that it stands. O there is that precious word, so fortifying, that what God does is done for ever. Nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken from it.

"I will work." Now not only over the years can we see this stamped on our Bethesda Homes: "I will work." What kind of Homes would they have been if God did not work? They would be the outcome of carnal reasoning and built upon probably selfish motives here and there. But God has intervened, praises be to His great name, and God has taken this and that person in hand, constrained some to do service in the Bethesda Homes themselves. And what can some of you say who are in that position? "I will work." It was not such a situation that some of you could say, "Yes, I was ever so willing." Some of you could say, "The rebellion in my heart was very strong." But, "I will work."

Now God works outwardly and God works inwardly. We can all see God's work outwardly, or at least, many of us can. But who can see what God works inwardly? We sometimes perhaps look at this word as it relates to ourselves and then we think how God is going to work, and so there is a plan formulated in our mind. God says, "I will work." I have had two experiences of this same word and they were quite diverse in their working out. There was a time when I needed God to appear for me when many were against me, and God worked and in due time brought His will to pass. Some years after, I was in another situation and this word I felt helpful to me again: "I will work." And so I could see the end, as I thought, that I should have what I wanted. But you see, I had to find out something and learn something. It was not God working to bring about the thing that I wanted, but it was God working in my heart to make me quite willing to leave the thing that I wanted and follow that which was the will of God. So we see these two quite diverse outcomes of God's working. "I will work." I can assure you on both those counts I saw God's work plainly.

How good it is when God gives us a receptive mind to His work. I am sure we have proved it in many things. We have thought, "This is God's work," and then proved it was not God's work. It has not fallen out as we expected. Sometimes it has been seen in the church of God when we have hoped certain things in respect of certain of our friends, and then we have been disappointed. We have to admit that this is not God's work, because God's work never fades away. So we are searched out and we have to come to the test. God puts every work in the fire. You will doubtless recall those words of the apostle: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." And sometimes it is

possible for us to think our work is God's work. O how much self-examination is called forth at times and over the years in respect of our Bethesda Homes. I am sure there have been a number of times when we have had to cross-examine ourselves and sometimes we have seen the writing on the wall and we are weighed in the balances and found wanting. It is our blessing that not everyone is consumed as Belshazzar when he was killed and perished in his sins. It is a good thing when God weighs us in the balances of the sanctuary. So I have mentioned the work of God outwardly which is seen, and inwardly which is not seen. In the latter case I have mentioned, nobody saw it and nobody knew about it and God humbled me under His mighty hand because of it and made me willing for His will.

"Whate'er consists not with Thy will,
O teach me to resign."

"I will work." One of the most cheering things in the Scriptures is the terminology. He does not say, "I will do what I can," but He says, "I will work." Can we come then, this afternoon, whatever application this word has to us, because it is written in Scripture, "I will work," and see it on an absolutely solid foundation. It will not be moved. "I will work." O blessed be God that His work is an unchanging work. God's work in all our lives, and if we are the people of God, we shall appreciate it, had its roots in eternity. When we begin our work, whatever it may be, then we start from a certain day. There is certainly a certain day when God's work is manifested, but it began in eternity. There is such a wonderful word in this same prophecy concerning God who hath declared the end from the beginning, and all God's works will always issue well. The great thing is that we need to have our eyes opened to see that this is true. O to have our eyes lifted up unto God and to see Him looking down upon all the things that are going on around us; all the people that are round about us; all the cares that sometimes envelop us; and yet to see in the church, in our own hearts, in the family, in the Bethesda Homes, "I will work." And how good it is when God works. Sometimes if we are agitated, we may wish for this, as He did to some in the earlier days when the Scriptures were written: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. The battle is not yours, but God's." If you turn over the pages in the Scriptures, O how wonderfully did God work. But it was on occasions when the situation was helpless otherwise.

There is a line in one of our hymns:

"And if no grace the Lord will grant,
I must lie down and die."

And what a blessing under those circumstances that God never fails! "I will work" - work and give grace. "He giveth more grace." Now is it, as we think about God's powerful work, His overcoming work, His God-glorifying work, that our souls begin to move with thanksgiving and praise so that if we sing God's praises in this sanctuary this afternoon it will not be the result of cant or emptiness, but our souls will be filled with praise unto God because of this great word, "I will work"? You will recall doubtless the occasion when Jehoshaphat was in a great strait and he looked up unto God and said, "Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." We shall not pass from this point without pointing this out: the willingness of God to work, not only the will to work, but the willingness to work. And so Jehoshaphat proved that God was willing to work and to save Judah at that time from the hands of the trinity of enemies that rose up against him.

Now, "I will work" - on the one side - and we shall doubtless have more to say about this - but let us just look for a moment or two at least at "Who shall let it?" Who shall hinder it? Who shall hold it back? First of all,

there is a devil who will attempt to hinder it. We often speak about God doing this and God doing that, and blessed be God that we can say so. But we do not always mention what the devil is doing. We must remember that whenever there is a good work, the devil will oppose it. It does not make any difference to this word, "I will work, and who shall let it?"

"Though hosts of enemies rise up,
To fill us with dismay,
The Lord will make His goodness pass
Before us in the way."

Satan is a great enemy and a very subtle enemy and sometimes we can be so deceived that he appears as an angel of light and convinces us that we are doing God's work when in fact we are doing his work. We may say, "How may I decide whether it is God's work or whether it is the devil's work?" Generally speaking, we can make a simple yardstick. It has been used many, many times before. The Lord's work eventually leads to peace, but the devil's work never does. The devil does not know anything about peace, and therefore he is all the while attempting to destroy peace. There is an exhortation in the Word of God to pursue those things that make for peace. "Who shall let it." So we have got to remember that we have this arch-enemy, Satan, and his work is, for the most part, underhand, in the dark. You will read in the book of Job of several situations that men work in the dark. That is Satan's work, because we read that a true person will come to the light that his deeds may be reproved.

"Who shall let it?" The devices of Satan are many. One of the counsels of God through the apostle was this concerning the ministry: "Not a novice," that is, not one who is ignorant of Satan's devices. We are all the while learning about Satan's devices, and are sometimes amazed when the Lord opens our eyes to see this is so. But how will Satan work against God's work? Well, perhaps we can put it like this. He will say that you can manage this, you have no need to pray about this, you will be all right; you lean to your own understanding. Now the Word of God says, "Lean not unto thine own understanding." I sometimes think we can look at these Scriptures and yet not apply them to ourselves, and think on the reference to this and that, that person or the other person, that applies to the world outside, but God has told me not to lean to my own understanding. But upon examination, you might find that you lean to your own understanding many, many times. If you are God's child, you will have to learn that God means what He says: "Lean not unto thy own understanding," because if you do, you will have serious consequences.

Now secondly, "Who shall let it?" The world. The world will do all it can to hinder the work of God. You might say, "But we are not of the world. We are believers in Jesus Christ." Let us bear this point in mind, that the world is not the wide, wide world outside, but it is the world inside, that world which listens to Satan's suggestions all the time and causes us to despise God's work, and even to say, "Leave it to me." It is not long before we get into confusion. "Who shall let it?" So one of the sad features in the church of God today is the hindrance of the world. The world gets into this person's heart and that person's heart rather like a bad fig. If it is put amongst good figs, it soon penetrates and makes them all bad. And yet, "I will work," and not even the world outside and the world in the heart will stop My work being performed.

But then there is another subtle point in regard to that which will attempt - and I must say *attempt* because God's Word will never be finally frustrated - the world, *the flesh*, as well as the devil. So the world may whisper to the flesh on the one hand, and Satan may whisper to the flesh on the other hand. It may be you have been in a situation where there have been three of you and you have been in the middle. You have been engulfed and ensnared and before you know where you are you are fighting against God, and what a

situation we are in now! One on its own we might manage, but when you get three, a three-fold cord is not easily broken and that refers to iniquity as well as that which is righteous and good. So then are we ensnared with the trinity of evil attacking us and getting us down and we cannot rise, or else we are bent over like the woman in the Scriptures who was bound by Satan for eighteen years. We often look upon diseases that people have today. We do not often think that they are bound by Satan. But that is what the Lord said in His day. He said, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Who shall hinder Me, and so that woman was made straight on the Sabbath day. Satan had eighteen years of conquest but God said, "I will work, and who shall let it?"

Looking at this matter spiritually, it may be that some of you even this afternoon may feel that you are captive led by Satan himself and you are absolutely bent over and you can in no wise lift up yourself. Has Satan got the victory? Have you been confronted with the trinity, the world the flesh and the devil, and with their combined arguments you have thought, "Yes, God will not be able to manage this. His work will fail with this"? This is why we have the Scriptures of truth because there we can look into the sacred pages and find from time to time that there are deliverances, that God commands deliverances for Jacob. "I will work, and who shall let it." There are many tributaries, so to speak, from this great river. But God still continues His work: "I will work." And we must remember this, that the devil never gives up, and unbelief never gives up, and the world never gives up. They always hope that they will be able to drag your soul down to hell. But "I will work." "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."

Let me just remind you of the thanksgiving. You are bound to give thanks unto Him. You are bound to give thanks to His great name.

"Dissolved by Thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found."

This surely is a foundation work. "I will work." Now God knows what difficulties you have, what troubles you have, what burdens you bear. But let us not despair, for God has still engraved these words with an iron pen in a rock. "I will work." There is a wonderful word, which I have mentioned quite a number of times, in the psalms, and that is, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." "I will work." O what a tremendous word this is when we have no helper. If we bring this to the most glorious consideration of all, as it relates to our salvation, are there not many enemies that rise up in your soul saying, "Salvation is not for you; you are not amongst the election of grace"? God says, "I will work." I will send My Spirit and will "convince you of your sin, then lead to Jesus' blood, and to your wondering view reveal the secret love of God." You cannot see this. You have got this trinity against you, the world, the flesh and the devil. "I will work." I will overthrow them all. The hymnwriter has a clear view of things when he says,

"Hail, mighty Jesus! how divine
Is Thy victorious sword!
The stoutest rebel must resign
At Thy commanding word.

"Deep are the wounds Thy arrows give;
They pierce the hardest heart;
Thy smiles of grace the slain revive,
And joy succeeds to smart."

And this is the mighty God. "I will work," work that you cannot work.

Now there is another point I would bring before you in respect of the greatness of this work, and that is the freeness of this work. In Matthew we read, "Freely ye have received, freely give." This work is perfectly free. It makes strange reading that the magicians in Egypt were able to perform some of the miracles that Moses performed - but with a slightly different ending - until the time came when they said, "This is the finger of God." It may be that God's work upon your soul, a wonderful miracle is performed, and then these hinderers will say, "But we can do that." So your faith is shattered for a time. God has shown you the plagues of your own heart; then you say, "This is the finger of God. I cannot make my heart clean. God has begun His working and it has all been free." We should always remember that. It would be impossible for us to pay God to do this work.

"I will work." Now when you look at this word in regard to grace, in regard to providence, is there anything you could buy, anything you could pay? What does God give when He works? He works with mercy. He works with grace. He works with love. "I will work." Now the natural mind would hinder this. The Scriptures tell us this. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." I understand it means this, that though the ungodly may appear to be merciful sometimes, yet they have an ulterior motive. They will not be merciful any more. But God continues to work. What a blessing it is even in respect of mercy that we can distinguish between the work of men and the work of God. "I will work." O blessed be God that this is so, and nothing can hinder it. The work of mercy, the work of grace, the work of providence, and far above everything else, the work of love, all these things are beyond our capability to purchase. "Freely ye have received, freely give." These words the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples when they were sent out to preach the gospel, will surely be a strength to ministers of the gospel and to those who may be in other callings.

"I will work." And God's work can never fail. Other things may fail. We find this work of love mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. "Charity never faileth." Other things will fail, but charity will never fail. So may this be a heartening word this afternoon and a work which will bring forth thanksgiving unto God, and as we see God working,

"Will for you work, and in you too,
Will guide you right, and bring you through."

"Who shall let it?"

Now looking over the long history of the Bethesda Homes, we have seen it. And so we may conclude with these verses:

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will."

The Lord command His blessing, even life for evermore. Amen.