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SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. OLDFIELD, AT GOWER STREET
CHAPEL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY MORNING, 8th JANUARY, 1893

Text: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." (Psa.xx.1)

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

These words refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament saints saw His coming - His incarnation, life, and death. They saw that, from the moment of His birth to that of His death, it was a day of trouble for Him. It must necessarily be so, because He was coming to stand in the place and stead of His people - to obey the law for them and to suffer the penalty of the law for them. His day (the day of His life) must therefore be one of trouble. In His day of trouble the Old Testament saints sympathized with Him. "Love and grief", one said, "my heart dividing" (158). Have love and grief our hearts divided? We love Him, we grieve for Him. "They shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech.xii.10). They knew something about it in Old Testament times, you see; they saw clearly that their souls' salvation rested upon what God did in that day of trouble. His endurance in the day of trouble was their salvation. Had He fallen or had He failed to accomplish the work that He was coming to do, their souls could not have an eternal abode in heaven above. They saw that the whole of their concerns rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ; they therefore pleaded for Him in the sense of His being not God, but man - not as God's equal, but as God's servant. "He took upon Him the form of a servant" (Phil.ii.7); and, as they prayed for Him, so He prayed for Himself. He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb.v.7). But the words may be applied to the members of the mystical body of Christ, and it is in that sense that they are upon my mind to speak from this morning. We may view them the words of the Head for the body (or church), or view them as the words of any particular member of the body; and so I may take them as my own or for those members of Christ who are now present. "The Lord hear me or hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend me or defend you." In speaking from the words, I will take -

I. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble."

II. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee."

I. There is a day of trouble for the body of Christ. There is one for the Head of the church, and there is one for the members of His mystical body; and there are some days of trouble that it

would not be unkind of me to wish for them - that is, for those who are the Lord's people, but who have not yet had those days of trouble that they must have before they have days of joy. There is a day of trouble in one's spiritual birth. There never was a natural birth without trouble - never one, of all the millions that have been born into this world, born into it without trouble. "In sorrow," said the Lord to our mother Eve, "thou shalt bring forth children," and that word has been verified in the birth of every child born into this world. And, as there is not a natural birth without trouble, I am quite sure there is not a spiritual birth without trouble. It is trouble that is compared to a woman in travail. It is called "Jacob's trouble" (Jer.xxx.7) - trouble of which there is none like it. If there are some here to whom such a day of trouble has not already come, it is not unkind of me to pray for it, to beg of God, if His sovereign will, that this, or some other day not far distant, might be the day that I, or some other servant of God, might be His instrument in the matter of your spiritual birthday. It is first a day of trouble, and it is afterwards one of joy. Some of us can remember distinctly this day of trouble, the day when the Lord began His work in our souls. Some cannot go to the particular day, but they can go to a period, certain weeks or months, when they experienced trouble they had never known before. For there is something about this exercise that there is not about any other - any natural trouble. It is trouble about the soul, and it is infinitely more important than any trouble about the body. It is about the soul's lost condition, its ruined state. Then what anxiety, struggling, wrestling, sighs, groans - what cries there are in this day of trouble! It is not necessarily a day of twelve or twenty-four hours, but a period of time when one really cries and prays to God, when it is vain to go down to Egypt for help, for no Egyptians can help in this matter. The wisest and richest of worldlings can give no help here. God alone is the Helper of His people in this day of trouble. What a mercy for those who have passed through this day of trouble! And what a mercy it would be for those who have not passed through it if God were to bring them into it this very day, though it might be the bitterest, most trying, and perplexing day they ever had in their lives! Yes; what a kindness and favour it would be! How it gladdens our hearts to find poor sinners in trouble and distress about their souls, crying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." How we feel we can join them in their supplications! We can say, in the words of my text, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." We can speak as Eli spoke to Hannah when he found what trouble she was in: "The God of Israel grant thee thy petition" (I Sam.i.17). After reproving her, he spoke comfortably unto her, for he had pleaded with his God for her. So it is with us.

Hunger and Thirst. After that day of trouble there is sure to be another, which arises from a source of spiritual hunger and thirst. Now if we had no food or drink for our bodies, would it not be a day of trouble? God's heaven-born children come into such a day of trouble spiritually. It is the new-born child that is a hungry and thirsty child; it is after the birth that the hungry or the thirsty day appears. If some before me have come into such a day as that, there is an evidence that you are spiritually alive, that you are born again, that you have a spiritual existence, that you are thirsting for God, the living God. This is a standing testimony, which earth and hell cannot overthrow, that you are born of the true and living God. As sure as there is hunger and thirst for Him, so surely you are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Now this day of trouble must come to all God's people. There must be a spiritual appetite where there is life. It is the healthy child that is hungering and thirsting. How apt one is to say: "If I am a child, I am a very sickly one." But how often we put things wrongly! The fact of your hungering and thirsting for spiritual food proves that you are not only a child, but a healthy child, a growing child, a child that wants food, a child to whom God will give food. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." Who has ears to hear like the parent (and God is the Parent)? Who listens for the first cry of the natural child like the mother or the father? How ready God is to hear the cries of His own children! And who is so ready as the parent to hear the sighs of the crying child when it is hungry or thirsty? And so the Lord is ready to hear. "The Lord hear thee." Unless the Lord hears the cry of the heaven-born soul for food, it does not matter who else hears; no one else can supply its needs. No one but the mother can give the breast. So there is no one but God that has the breast of consolation to give to the spiritual child (Isa. lxvi. 11). He must, and He does, supply the needs of His people.

Absence after Communion enjoyed. Now we may come to another day of trouble, but before this there is generally a time of refreshing, a time of feasting upon God's consolations - on pardoning love and blood. There is a time of refreshing rest and sleep. This resembles a babe after birth. It has hungered and thirsted for the breast, and, after it has had its fill, it lies down and goes to sleep. The parent says: "Don't disturb it; let it have its rest as long as it can; it will wake soon enough." So we sometimes say of a heaven-born soul that is in the enjoyment of divine things: "Let it have enjoyment as long as it can; don't disturb it." Sometimes people will come and intimate what troubles are in store. But they are sure to come soon enough; let the little ones enjoy their rest and peace as long as God shall please. By and by, you see, the child wakes; it turns its eyes about.

Sometimes it is alone: the mother gone, the nurse gone, the friends gone. There it is alone, a solitary one. And so it is with the child of God sooner or later. After times of refreshing and consolation, times of quietude, peace, and rest, the Lord, for the trial of His people's faith, withdraws and hides Himself. He is for a little while unseen. Then the heaven-born soul is like Job, when he looked backward and forward, on the right hand and on the left, but could not see Him. Then he began to cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" (Job xxiii.3). It was his God, his Parent, he wanted; and so it is with all the children of God in their solitary condition - it is God they want. Now the Lord hears the cry of His solitary ones in this day of trouble. A day of solitariness is a day of trouble to a heaven-born soul; it is compared to one who is fatherless or a widow. Spiritual trouble is greater than natural trouble, so that the loss of God, or the absence of God, is greater than the loss of an earthly parent or husband. It is a day of trial for one's faith. One says: "Have I really hungered and thirsted after righteousness, really tasted that God is gracious? Or have I been dreaming about these things? Have I been vainly imagining these things? If I am God's, how is it that He is not with me? If I have drawn from the breast of consolation, how is it I cannot do so now? If I have had marks and evidences of being a child of God, where are they now?" Then sometimes there is a feeling like this springing up: "If I am not a child of God, make me one. 'Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood'" (Psa.xxvi.9). Does not this sound like the language of a member of God's family? To us there are no children like our own, no brothers or sisters like our own. And so, if to us there are no people on earth like God's people, what does it go to show but that we belong to them? The world loveth its own, and the church loveth its own. So, if you are sighing for God's presence, union and communion with God's family, what an evidence it is that you are one of them! "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psa.lxviii.6). Now He could not set the solitary in families if they were not first made solitary, and He must make them solitary. God says: "How shall I put thee among the children?" (Jer.iii.19). The child answers: "I do not know; I do not deserve to be put among them. How can I?" God shows us how He can, through the doing and dying of His dear Son and by the work of the blessed Spirit, put them with the family, and how He will number them with His family in that day when He makes up His jewels (Mal.iii.17).

Affliction. Again, a day of affliction will come, sooner or later. I do not know that I can ask God for a day of affliction to come to any of you or to any of God's children. I prefer leaving that to Him, and when the day comes it is a favour to have a spirit

of prayer for the afflicted one. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." I have had some days of affliction, both bodily and family affliction. I know that those are days of trouble unless God makes them otherwise. It is not an affliction in body or family that makes a person humble or stains his pride. I have proved just the reverse, that affliction of body has stirred up my carnal passions stirred up unbelief and rebellion, and caused my heart to boil with rage. Affliction itself has done this. Then God has come and dealt with me, put a cry into my heart, and granted my request. What a change has then come over me! How the affliction sanctified has humbled me, laid me in the dust at His blessed feet, enabled me to stand still and wait for His salvation, and caused me to see that affliction was one of the best things I could have - one of the things I most needed for the purging of my breast, for the sanctifying of my soul, for setting me apart more to the service of His honour and glory. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." When God puts a cry into the heart, He hears that cry, and, where the affliction is sanctified, it is turned into a blessing.

Death. But I must hasten on to say that there is one day of trouble before all of us, and that is the day of our death; and we do not know that it is not this day - that it will not be today, or next week, or next month, or this year. The day of death is a day of trouble. Death is a gloomy thing, a dreadful monster. It is viewed as such by God's people more than it is by others. Others will not look at it; they turn away from it, banish it from their minds. The children of God cannot, and do not wish to do that. They know it is coming; it is before them, but how far distant they cannot tell. And their concern is to be prepared to meet it. Oh, what a day it is! Sometimes it makes a child of God tremble. He wonders how it will be with him; and you know the Lord laid this matter upon Jeremiah's mind. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee." What child of God has not run with footmen - men who have a mere profession of religion without the power of it, men who have no burden to carry? Bunyan says that a man's strength is not to be judged by the pace he goes, but by the burden he has to carry. The footmen have not a burden to carry, as the children of God have. They do not feel their sins a burden. Satan does not obstruct them as he does the child of God. Who has not been weary of these footmen? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jer.xii.5). There is not a child of God but wonders what he shall do in that hour. Yet there have been times when we have been favoured to read our title clear "to mansions in the skies" (474). Then death has not frightened us, nor Satan's threats

terrified us; we have felt that all would be well. But it is not always so. The day of our death is more or less a day of trouble. I have to say: "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more" (Psa.xxxix.13). Doubtless, all God's people are ripening for glory before God takes them there. We are not limiting the Almighty, or speaking as though our own judgment were a standard for every child of God. Some are like the yellow apple on a tree; you think it will fall, for it looks too ripe to hang on the tree any longer, but many a day it hangs there. It is ready to fall, and so it is with some of the dear saints of God. Nevertheless, the day of death is more or less a day of trouble. One said: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psa.xxiii.4). "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." The Lord hear every child of God before me in the day of trouble, the day of death, and in the intervening days that are days of trouble!

II. Then there is another petition: "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." Here is a particular God specified, the God of Jacob. The God of Jacob was a God well known to the Old Testament saints, and He is a God well known to the New Testament saints. He revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The psalmist said: "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help" (Psa.cxlvi.5). This is my desire for myself and for every one of God's people before me. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." We need a defence in the first place from Satan, but it must be a divine defence. God must set a hedge about us, for no one else can set a hedge about us that Satan cannot leap over or make a gap through. There is no defence for a soul against Satan but God Himself. He has delivered us from Satan.

Then we need as mighty a defence against sin. What a powerful thing is sin! What a defence we need against it! What havoc sin has made in our world! It entered into the hearts of our first parents. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom.v. 12).

"How sad our state by nature is;
Our sin how deep its stains" (764)

Who but the Mighty God, in the Person of His incarnate Son, is a sufficient bulwark or wall of salvation to defend us from sin?

We need, further, a defence from our own fallen natures. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." If we have an enemy in sin and Satan, we have an enemy in self. We rob, spoil, and distress our own souls more than anything else. We need a defence from ourselves, from the world, and from death and hell.

Just a few words about the defence. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov.xviii.10). What is the name of the Lord?

Love. It is, in the first place, the essence of the Lord. It is His love. The name of the God of Jacob - that is, the love of the God of Jacob - defend thee! Look at the child. When it sees trouble, where does it love to be? On the parent's breast, near the heart. And so with the child of God. In trouble he wants to know God's love, to be on the breast of the Almighty, in the heart of a dear Redeemer, in the affections of a Three-One God. Such a one says: "If God loves my soul, I am safe. In His love there is protection that will never fail."

Life. Again, His essence is His life. His life is eternal. Here, then, is an eternal defence.

Power. Further, His essence is His power. And here is almighty power. "The name of the God of Jacob" - the love, life, and power of the God of Jacob - "defend thee."

God's Attributes. The name of the God of Jacob includes His attributes and perfections: His justice and His mercy; His righteousness and His grace; His truth and His love; His holiness and His compassion; All these perfections of Deity preserve, defend, and keep the children of God. There is preservation in no other way. And nothing else but an interest in these glorious perfections will satisfy those who are born and taught of God. "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks" (Isa.xxxiii. 10). This is one of the names of our God - the name of the Father, who has chosen His people; the name of His Son, who has redeemed them; the name of the Spirit, who has quickened them, taught them, led them, and brought them safely to bliss and glory, and is doing so still. My friends, may this be your portion, and may it be mine! The Lord hear us in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend us! May the Lord add His blessing! Amen.
