

God's provision and protection (Quality: Very good)

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- [0 : 00] It is on my mind to ask your attention again this evening to the text we considered this morning. You will find it in the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, verses 19 and 20.
- The 19th and 20th verses in the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.
- But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
- I don't feel I need spend much time reviewing that which we spoke of this morning.
- Relative to the solemnity of God having spoken. And God being very clear with respect to the great distinction which exists between those that are willing and obedient.
- [1 : 22] And those that refuse and rebel. If I may say so, our hearts are found in one or other of the category.
- Why the natural heart is at enmity to God. My friends, how some of us can look back upon early years and remember when our minds were disposed to seek everything in the world.
- And had no real positive interest in the ways and things of God and of godliness.
- We do thank God. If so be the Lord by his spirit made us willing in the day of his power.
- And the power of the Holy Spirit is vital in the setting of the heart. In the way of obedience.
- [2 : 29] In the way of willingness to serve the Lord. And to follow those things that his word declares are to his own glory and to his people's good.
- How solemn it is to be left. Oh my friends, what a mercy it is. As we may reflect upon the distinction between being in that rebellious attitude.
- And then being made willing. And to seek diligently in all heartfelt sincerity a portion with the church of God.
- The living church of God. In that narrow way which leads from the world and the things of it.
- To that great and glorious promised land which the Lord has set before his people. Well now, I read in purpose the 24th chapter in the book of Joshua.
- [3 : 50] And although we know it is comparatively early in the experience of the children of Israel. They had much to go through subsequently. But nevertheless, Joshua was led of the Spirit of God to review with the heads of the Israelites.
- The ways of the Lord from the beginning of the kingdom of Israel. When the Lord in covenant set Abraham apart.
- Made him different from the environment in which he was born. Some have suggested that as many as 300 idols were present where Abraham was initially raised.
- And we do not have any violation to the scriptural history. When we say it was an area of the earth sunk in idolatry.

With various interests. Almost anything apart from the true God. And the saving knowledge that is in the scriptures.

[5 : 15] Well now, I like the language. In Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt in the other side of the flood in old time.

Even Tirad, the father of Abraham and the father of Nacor. And they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood.

And led him throughout all the land of Canaan. And multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac. What a wonder, what a unique experience is recorded concerning the history of Abraham.

He seems to be an individual upon whom the Lord in the power of his spirit weaned from the many idols that were worshipped all around him.

And may well be the idol which held his heart captive until the time of the Lord's grace appeared toward him.

[6 : 31] Changed his heart. Renewed his will. And turned his feet to Zion's hill. And in a measure, we can recognize the family of Abraham.

In that a similar experience is the experience of Abraham's successors.

That is, the children of Abraham. You know, the people in the days of our Lord when here upon earth boasted.

We have Abraham for our father. But my friends, oh, when we think of Abraham's beginnings.

How necessary that they, as professed children of Abraham, should be blessed in the same way as their father was.

[7 : 33] To be brought out of the deadness and weakness of idolatry into a knowledge of the leading and teaching of the Most High God.

And we believe that everyone that is a true child of Abraham in the faith is blessed with a similar experience.

Brought out from idolatry. You say, but am I an idol? Well, every alternative which holds your powers of desire and greed is an idol.

It's an idol. Whatever the nature of it might be, if God is not in all your thoughts, then surely you're guilty of an alternative way of worship.

You may worship your own interests. You may worship your own possessions, positions. Yes, there are many, many things that hold the characteristic of idolatry in the world around us.

[9 : 00] And we know solemnly that idolatry is not a strange experience, even to those who are brought to fear God and to follow God.

Because by nature we are in the world and of the world with our desires naturally toward the world.

But what a mercy. If God who called Abraham has called us. And that he was made willing to leave, as it were, those things that were naturally his initially.

And go forth. And he went out. Not knowing whither he went. He, as it were, followed the leading of the Lord.

Without a due regard of where and when he would be led.

[10 : 06] He depended, in other words, entirely upon the Lord when he left the environment of his upbringing to go forth.

And ultimately to be guided as we read in the Genesis history of Abraham.

Abraham. But one thing that really impressed me in reading this chapter is the way the Lord went before his people.

Now Abraham, naturally speaking, it was a big thing for him to leave his father and his mother, or his mother particularly, and to go into a strange place.

I know Tyra went with him to the very borders of the Promised Land. But nevertheless, there was that ultimate distinction and separation.

[11 : 17] And except a man leave his father and his mother, he cannot be my disciple, says the Lord. So one of the conditions of discipleship is to leave, if it's necessary, those that are near and dear to us, who do not see with us, cannot understand us, and sometimes may express their feelings in very severe and critical ways, that wound us and hurt us.

But my friends, there is that willingness, that willingness to leave the things of this world in the spirit of our hearts, while we seek the blessing of God in our soul's salvation.

Now, one of the things that stands out in this particular history in the book of Joshua is what the children of Israel were called upon to experience.

It was the Lord's will that they should go into Egypt, and that they should be there a long time, and that they should be bondmen, and that they should be stricken with taskmasters, who were most unjust in the requirements of their working life.

They seemed to be under constant oppression, and that was part of the will of God for the children of Israel in those long years, when they had no way of defense, no self-defense, no way of hope, of ultimate deliverance.

[13 : 20] They were entirely cast upon the will and way of God, divine sovereignty was the secret of their preservation.

And this is a wonderful truth. The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. The Egyptian oppression was a means in God's hand of their increase in the knowledge of God and his sufficiency.

to multiply them and to increase their numbers considerably. Well then also, another facet in the history is the way they were ultimately brought under the guidance of Moses Moses to leave to leave Egypt.

The equipment, the preparation of Moses in the life of Pharaoh and the court of Pharaoh was a wonderful stepping stone in God's purposes to the deliverance of the whole nation of Israel from their bondage.

and my friends, we can but recognize how the Lord spared Moses, how he educated Moses and how ultimately he raised up Moses to be a wonderful, conscientious leader of the people of God in this respect.

[15 : 09] but the Red Sea, the Red Sea, what a prospect, presented itself before them with the Egyptians pursuing them at heel because they were losing by their liberation, by the Israelis' liberation and the determinate counsel of Pharaoh to prevent them from going.

But there was a greater than Pharaoh. There was a stronger than all the strength of the children of Egypt.

There the Lord made a way through the Red Sea when there was no other possibility of their deliverance.

And my friends, oh what a wonderful thing it is that this God still works on the same principle. He sees fit in his sovereign will and purpose from time to time to bring his people into situations where there appears to be no way escape, no avenue of deliverance and brings them as it were to the point if God doesn't appear for them there is nothing but imminent destruction.

And what a mercy that the Lord as we put it in the language of the hymn, he tarries off till men are faint and comes at evening late.

[17 : 04] He lets things get so far as to be beyond the help of another. He lets things that think matters deteriorate to such a degree that self-help and creature help, every avenue of help is lost to us.

And then he makes a way. He makes a way. And I believe that is not only true in the deliverance afforded by God through the person of his only beloved son to save us and to bless us with everlasting life, but also in the providential appearances and deliverances that God affects in the lives of his people.

And my friends, he brings them to crisis points. But in the crisis when it seems to be only the Lord can help, then the Lord appears in answer to the groanings of the prisoner and makes a way through the Red Sea that his children of Israel were not only given a safe passage, but also they saw their enemies drowned as Joshua here records in this particular chapter.

The living God reigning over their adversaries. And we can follow them through the wilderness of Sinai.

I can't read. How was such a multitude to be protected? How was such a multitude to be fed? How was the necessary provision and protection to be given to them in that situation?

[19 : 08] They brought nothing as it were through with them that could satisfy the 40 years of pilgrimage. village, nevertheless, the Lord God omnipotent reign, and they had manna from heaven, and they had water given to them out of the rock, and by miracle, the Lord sustained them, provided for them, and protected them, because there was the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud that went before them, and ultimately stood behind them to protect them from their adversaries.

Now, I'm just giving a very simple outline of the situation, but what I'm seeking to establish is this.

When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes his enemies to be at peace with him. What a wonderful thing it is, that our adversaries are limited by the will of God upon them.

And the people of God have their enemies, they have enemies within, as well as enemies without, but the Lord reigns to save them from ruin, to save them from destruction, to save them from being overwhelmed and overcome by all their adversaries.

This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise. Who is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good.

[21 : 12] Now to relate what I have said to the spirit of the text, if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

The good of the land is set before the people of God in the great and precious promises of his word. When our ways pleases the Lord, then my friends, he appears for us in remarkable and sometimes in miraculous ways to show very clearly that he is our God and that our salvation is the work of his own hands.

What a mercy it is. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. The experience of the children of God here below is that which is good, that which is most profitable, most satisfying, most rewarding in that sense that what is required of us as we are enabled by grace to fulfill in the spirit of faith and hope and love is to our own personal advantage.

knowledge. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. What a wonderful thing to feel, happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, this people, the church of God, happy art thou, O Israel.

And my friends, when the Lord appears, when he comes and makes provision, or when he delivers us from some of our enemies that are threatening us, then surely happiness arises in our hearts.

[23 : 44] The happiness of believers is a wonderful experience in the outworking of our lives before him.

Let the world say that Christians are unhappy. Let the world suggest that they're always mournful, always depressed.

My friends, that is not so, because of all the people on the face of the earth that know what true happiness is.

It's the people of God. They have every reason to be happy, because there's everything in God himself to make them happy.

well now, the text says, if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

[24 : 55] If the spirit of willingness and obedience was more to the forefront in the lives that we live, we should partake in a greater way the benefit and blessing of the goodness and mercy of the Lord.

God. The Lord withholds his spirit in consequence of the disobedience and unwillingness in the hearts of his people.

And there is a connection between the prosperity of our souls in the exercise of willing obedience and the leanness of our souls when our ways do not please the Lord.

And my friends, there are witnesses in this congregation this evening of the two sides which I seek to lay before you. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

if your ways please the Lord, the Lord will smile upon you and grant you his blessings.

[26 : 30] But what is the contrary consideration? Well, it's this. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.

that particularly that second verse associates with those that live in rebellion against the Lord, that are indeed rejecters of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and harden in sin to destruction.

And the Lord in his displeasure draws forth his sword of justice and they are lost souls. But my friends, there is this, that in the outworking of Christian experience, there are seasons, so to speak.

Seasons when under the blessing of the Lord and that spirit of gracious willingness and that desire to walk in obedience before the Lord, bring from the good hand of the Lord those things which produce comfort, peace, happiness, blessing, all those expressions, word expressions of the smile of the Most High God resting upon us.

But oh, when the Lord turns his face, when as it were, we come into the spirit of antagonism with regard to the Lord's will and way for us, when we become rebellious in respect to the lot that he's cast into our lap, when we're silent in our praises and in our thanksgivings for his goodness and his mercy toward us, well then, the Lord makes known not to annihilation, but he makes known his displeasure, he frowns upon us, he withholds from us much of his spirit's active presence in our hearts and in our lives, and we become cold, far off, prayerless, and indifferent to the will and way of

[29 : 08] God. Now, if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. When we think of that aspect and the aspect of rebellion, refusing and rebelling, that is, the natural spirit that's within us, that sometimes rises up in a fearful degree, and withstands, as it were, the Lord himself, in the spirit which we maintain in religious devotions, as well as in the attitude of our life to the lot that the Lord has given to us.

My friends, sometimes we get so far off from the Lord that we hardly see mercy in anything of the Lord's leadings and dealings with us, and yet the worst mercy of God toward us is so fine and delicate that, as I said, we need God's mercy in every breath we draw.

It is of the Lord's mercy that we're not consumed because his compassion fail not. They're new every morning. Great is God's faithfulness.

But oh, sometimes, morning by morning, and we wake up in a spirit of rebellion continuing, and we're out of season with regard to the will and way of the Lord as he directs and orders our steps.

in the wilderness pathway. And you remember to yet refer again to the experience within the children of Israel as they traversed from the Red Sea through the wilderness to the borders of the promised land.

[31 : 15] There were seasons of rebellion, seasons when they turned against Moses, seasons when they expressed that they would prefer to return into Egypt, into the bondage, rather than they would continue in the way of the Lord and under the good hand of the Most High, resting upon them and protecting and providing for them.

And my friends, the expression that the Apostle Paul gives in Romans 7, when he says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

There is an awful, an awful expression sometimes of the wretchedness of the heart by nature.

And we're still in the body, we're still capable of giving expression to the wretchedness and ruin of our hearts before God and toward God, except the Lord by his grace overcomes and produces within us a willingness and obedience to submit to his will, to walk in his ways, to follow him and seek ever grace to do that which is right and pleasing in his sight.

There is the alternative consideration. When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

[33 : 05] There is such a thing with knowing that we have enemies within as well as enemies without, knowing that the wretchedness of our carnal flesh is still at enmity to God and his word and his ways, but nevertheless the Lord by conquering grace brings into captivity the wretchedness of fallen humanity and enables his people to eat the good of the lamb.

Listen, listen, I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his word was sweet to my taste.

Do you know that aspect of Christian experience? Or you say, I know the wretchedness and it's a warfare, it's a constant conflict, flesh against spirit and spirit against flesh and I wonder sometimes if there ever will be for me a deliverance from the conflict.

Well, my friends, the day of deliverance will come in the Lord's time, but he gives foretastes of the deliverance from time to time by bringing that which is of the flesh into subjection, into captivity, so to speak, for the blessings of the spirit.

and then the children of God look around themselves and can see nothing in the world that would incline them at all to change places with the pleasures and prosperities of this present time state as against.

[34 : 56] Enjoy the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, sitting as it were at the feet of Jesus and hearing his word and knowing the sweetness and sacredness and faithfulness of God in the promises that he gives to those who seek to follow him.

Disobedience, unwillingness and disobedience, a terrible enemy to the peace and prosperity of our soul.

Oh, that we may militate in genuine desire for the smile and approbation of God, that we may militate against these inward enemies that bring us into darkness and bondage in our spiritual experiences.

love of Jesus. What thou shall eat the good of the land, the good of the land, to know that we're loved of God before the foundation of the world, to receive a token of his favor with the seal of salvation resting upon it, having, as it were, the witness of his spirit with our spirits, that despite all our faults and our failings, our sins, which occasion such a sense of shame and confusion of face toward us, then still the love of God in Jesus Christ is an overwhelming consideration.

Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee. What a wonderful thing it is to have the knowledge that sin is forgiven.

[37 : 12] Surely that's eating the good of the land, isn't it? To be given the spirit of grace and supplication when in prayer, perhaps in a secret place, or perhaps from time to time in the public assembly.

What a favor it is to know the influence of the spirit upon our spirit and feel that spirit of access before the Lord that he has given us a spirit of prayer.

He will honor the spirit which he has imparted and will fulfill the desires expressed even beyond the limits of our expectation.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. what a wonderful thing is the grace of God.

What a wonderful thing it is to be in the exercise of faith and love, willing and obedient as before the Lord.

[38 : 33] we read the days of darkness are many. And my friends, so often the root of that is found in the heart of the child of God.

The Lord withdraws the shinings of his face. He brings, as it were, a spirit of coldness and distance to bear upon our spirits.

We're made a true mourners and wonder whether the Spirit of God has ever begun the good work in us.

We fall into the terrible conflict of doubts and fears. But all the blessing when the Lord shines again as the Son of Righteousness with healing in his wings, heals our wounds, excites, as it were, the precious soul in the response of love to love.

As we realize, nevertheless, despite all our sins and shortcomings, the Lord says, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

[40 : 05] Therefore, in loving kindness have I drawn thee. Well, now, if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

I want just to touch upon the practical expression of spiritual obedience as the Lord Jesus Christ sets before his church an example.

In his pilgrimage, he came to the baptism of John in the river Jordan.

And John objected to exercising the solemnity of baptizing his Savior.

He said, I have need of thee, and comest thou to me. he couldn't reconcile the relative situation.

[41 : 23] But the Lord said, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. And in that, the Lord Jesus Christ gives us clearly an indication of the right way for his people in the response of love to God for the manifestation and tokens of God's love of which they have been the favored subjects for Jesus' sake.

And my friends, the Lord Jesus Christ says this, and I leave this as one of my closing remarks this evening. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. One of the fruits of the Spirit in the lives of the children of God is the shedding abroad of the love of God in some measure toward them that they respond in a reciprocal way.

Having experienced a little of the love of God toward them in the matter of their soul salvation, they desire to respond in obedience to that revelation and example of the Lord Jesus Christ and attend to an open profession of the precious name of the Saviour to whom they are obliged to acknowledge everything in a saving way and manner has come through his sufferings and death toward them.

Every grace and every favour comes to us through Jesus' blood. God and if you have hope in the mercy of God and can look forward with some humble expectation to the experience of ultimate introduction into the very presence of God clothed in the righteousness washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ does it not become us to show whose we are and whom we serve?

[44 : 06] Is it right to be in the world as a kind of secret disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

My friends this is a point which I seldom touch upon in my ministry. As a pastor I certainly never laboured the point but I feel it's a most important consideration.

It's a most important response to an interest in the love of Christ and his sacrifice for us that we show publicly our indebtedness to him in the exercise and experience of loving obedience to his revealed will for us.

May the Lord forgive all that I've said amiss and bless his own truth that may bring us into the confines of the positive side of the text.

If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land but if ye refuse and rebel the negative side ye shall be devoured with the sword for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

[45 : 52] Amen.