

THE ACT AND TIME OF DIVINE DELIVERANCE  
FORGOTTEN.

A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,

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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET,  
CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 1st AUGUST, 1886,

“They remembered not His hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy—{Psalms. 78: 42}.

Our Lord said to the children of Israel, through Moses His beloved servant, “Thou shalt remember all the way in which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness.” Those words are still fresh, and they are still in force. It well becomes the children of God even to-day, to remember the dealings of their Heavenly Father with their souls, and with their bodies also; but like the children of Israel, we are prone to forget our God, and to forget those great and gracious deliverances also, which he has so frequently wrought for us. God complains as it were of this in connection with the nation of Israel, in the psalm out of which we have taken our text to-night, saying, “Ye have turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” Have you and I never “limited the Holy One of Israel?” Have not thousands of the members of God’s church limited God, the

great Head of the church, in every age of time? And is it not the policy of the devil to tempt the people of God to limit the Holy One of Israel? Satan knows well that in proportion as we limit our God our hearts are barren, and a spirit of rebellion prevails within. We are, if one may speak for others, exceedingly prone to limit God with respect to time, for we want to bind Him in relation to this point. We want Him to hear us, and to hear us now. We want certain blessings, and we want them to-day. We desire to see His almighty hand, and we want Him, as it were, to put it out of heaven at the present time. God, however, will not be limited by His creatures as to time. He will, and He must work, for He has bound Himself to do so; but He will work in His own way, and also in His own time. The children of Israel, like God's dear people now, sometimes in impatience and unbelief, limited their covenant God in this respect. Then, again, they frequently limited Him as to the blessings they wanted. They not only desired His blessing, but they complained if this or the other particular blessing was not given, Notwithstanding that God's hands are full of mercies, they mention particular favors or manifestations of His goodness, which they believe are needful, and they would bind the Almighty God to grant them what they deem indispensable gifts. Thus they limited the Holy One of Israel. Again, they sometimes limited Him with regard to their position, and their path or paths in the wilderness. And have you and I never said, in relation to providential and perhaps, in relation to spiritual matters also, "Lord, not that way, lead us not in that path." We have tried, and have done our very best, or worst, to limit the Almighty One of Israel as to this matter. God, however, has marked

out the path in which His people shall walk; for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," therefore, their goings are of the Lord. Our God will do all His will as to the paths in which He leads His people, as to the blessings He confers upon them, and as to the times and periods of appearing unto and for them. But, perhaps, one of the worst features of our experience is, that of limiting the Holy One of Israel as to His work and His power; hence it is said in my text, to-night, "They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy."

Having thus reached the subject, let me offer a few plain and simple remarks upon it. The text divides itself very easily into three parts: — First, the hand of God; second, the day on which that hand appeared; and third, the fact asserted,—Israel did not remember it.

In the first place, let us make a few observations on the hand of God. "They remembered not His hand." We are now to lose sight of times and circumstances, at least for a few minutes, and endeavor to meditate upon the glorious hand of our covenant God. Sometimes we try to preach His heart, and at other times we preach His eye, while when so directed we try to set forth His attentive ear which is ever ready to hear prayer, or we dwell upon His bowels of mercies: but to-night for a few minutes we are to direct our attention to His hand.

I notice in the first place, that we, like the children of Israel are sometimes forgetful of the oath of God. Do you say, What has that to

do with His hand? I will tell you, for perhaps you have forgotten the fact, and we are very prone to forget very much that is of great importance, God's oath is connected with His hand. There are various methods of taking oaths, and different countries take them in different ways. The children of Israel, or the Jewish nation took oaths or swore in the presence of God by lifting up their hands. Hence Abraham said, " I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet " from the people whom I have succoured and delivered, lest they should charge me with having been selfish and covetous. He deemed it a matter of importance to swear before God that in what he had done he was quite disinterested, and desired no material gain; hence, "I have lifted up my hand unto the Most High God." Well now, our God has in condescension to our weakness and darkness,—and I do beg attention to this,—in order that we may not forget His hand, in condescension to our feebleness, our God has said, "I lift up My hand to heaven and say, I live for ever, so that we have God's promise and God's oath, and we often forget them both, losing sight of them altogether. " They remembered not His hand," which God lifted up for Abraham their ancestor and swear two things; first, "Abraham, I will be thy God," and I confirm My promise by My oath. I lift up My hand to heaven and say, By My life, and My name, and My honor, I will be Thy God; and secondly, I lift up My hand and swear, that having become your God, I will give you the land of Canaan." And our God has promised that He will be our God; and as an oath for confirmation

puts an end to all strife,—God, because He could swear by no greater, swear by Himself, that He would for ever be our God:

*“Abram, I’ll be Thy God,” He said;  
And He was Abram’s God.”*

And what He said to Abraham in covenant, that He says to every believer in His own great name whether he be great or small. “I will be Thy God and, further, having promised and sworn that He would be our God for ever, He has also promised and sworn that He will give us the land of promised rest. Do you always remember this solemn act of Jehovah, these holy promises of your God, and this solemn oath of the great I AM ?

*“His honor and His name’s at stake,  
To save me from the burning lake.”*

To come down as low as I possibly can, I think of Nehemiah’s words, “Who desire to fear Thy name.” There are those in the family of God who cannot speak positively with regard to the nature and character of their fear; but you can speak positively with regard to your desire to fear God’s name. That desire must be fulfilled, for God is its Author, and its root is His grace, and you are among those honored persons for whom God lifted up His hand, and swear by Himself that He would be your God for ever, and take you to dwell for ever with Himself. Now, as our time is limited, our remarks must be

brief, and therefore, let that suffice for the first point. They remembered not His uplifted hand when He swear that He would save them.

In the second place, they remembered not the almightiness of His hand. They not only forgot how solemn it was, but they remembered not its strength. And if I may speak for you, you are very prone to forget the same fact. Our God, however, has said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." I would always hear the voice of my covenant God and heavenly Father asking me as it were the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord Is there a rocky heart too hard for Me to break? Is there a knotty question too hard for Me to answer? Are there puzzling and perplexing circumstances too tangled for Me to unravel? Will you limit My wisdom? Will you regard Me as having an arm too short to reach you, or too unskillful to manage your affairs? They remembered not the strength of God's arm, and they forgot what He had done. They went back in their hearts, it is said, to Egypt, and remembered not what God had done for them there,— how He put His strong arm underneath the whole nation, and lifted them all out of the fiery furnace at once; and they forgot it all. They forgot also how marvelously He made a way for them through the sea and in the wilderness. They saw that great sight, the outstretched hand of God, in the fiery and cloudy pillar, they saw the whole host of Egypt behind them, and the rolling waters and dividing waters before them, and how God with His strong hand went before and opened a

way for them all through the Red Sea. Having reached, however, the opposite shore of the sea, and seen all their enemies destroyed, it was not long before they began to talk about stoning Moses. You have brought us out of Egypt to perish here in the desert. Let us not pelt the children of Israel, for we are not better than they. Let us not cast stones at them; for, like them, we have most ungratefully forgotten the strength of the arm of the Lord our God. He has done much for us, and in some respects more for us, spiritually, than He did for the children of Israel. Theirs was a temporal redemption, ours is a spiritual one. Theirs was a temporal deliverance, ours is a spiritual one; and the marvelous manner in which the Red Sea was divided, was a manifestation of Divine providence, and providence is in many respects inferior to, at least it is always subordinate to God's grace. They forgot what He had done, and we forget what He is doing now; whilst His everlasting arms are underneath us, and we are lying in them. Oh what provoking creatures are we! And what a merciful God is ours! We lie in His everlasting arms, and murmur and question His right to do what He is doing, or the wisdom of His dealings with us! "You may do this, sir, but we do not." I am glad if you do not; but my heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. I would have something in the church that I do not see in it, and something in this, that, and the other individual that I do not see in them, and a good deal in the circumstances of my life, that I cannot find in them; yet the church is not mine, but God's, and all souls are in His hands; and, therefore, it must be that,

*"My life's minutest circumstance,  
Is subject to His eye."*

And yet, whilst everlasting arms are underneath me, and in my judgment and understanding I believe that I should sink into perdition were it not so, I complain of the conduct of My heavenly Father. They remembered not His hand, how strong it was, and how its omnipotence was displayed. Its omnipotence is being displayed now, and we forget what He has done, and also the strength of His arm with regard to the future. What have we to do with the future? Nothing, or not much at present, except this one important point which should not be lost sight of, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is a thousand times better for us, than if we possessed the spirit of prophecy, and could look into the future and see what God's arrangements are. Grasp that promise with all your hearts if you can, and you may leave the future where it is, in the hands of your gracious and covenant God. They remembered not the omnipotence of His arm. They forgot the victories He had wrought for them, the way He had made for them, and how He had preserved them. The victories He had achieved for them. "His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." That high and strong hand and holy arm hath gotten us the victory until now; and I do not, brethren, go too far, for are you not something more than conquerors and overcomers here to-night. Have you been trampled on and destroyed as a Christian? No, not yet. Then Satan has not finally overcome you, but in fact you are hitherto more than conquerors through the blood, and

power, and word of the Lamb. Forget not the victories He has wrought for you.

Again, I sometimes think we are prone to forget another important point in connection with the wonder-working hand of God; and that is, how He preserved us, before we knew His dear name. "Preserved in Christ Jesus, and called." We are ready enough to begin with those matters with which God began with us, or that is how we express ourselves. My brother, God did not begin with you in your regeneration; the new birth was not the commencement of God's power, and favor, and mercy towards you. In point of fact, God's mercy and favor had no beginning. But let me speak of the actual and active manifestations of His power. The moment you came into the world the arms of Divine providence received you, and you were preserved in Christ Jesus before you were called. Many of God's people have had hair-breadth escapes from death, before they were quickened by His grace. The late Mr. Gadsby used to say, as I have been informed, and I think I have read it somewhere, in relation to preservation before calling: "The people of God cannot die, while in a state of nature, for the life of them." Not that they were alive in themselves, but,

*"He gave us grace in Christ His Son,  
Before He spread the starry sky."*

Saul of Tarsus could not die a Pharisee. The thief could not die

before grace entered his heart, and sweetly forced him to say, ('Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The jailor could not die before he was brought to say, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Yes, we forget God's strong arm, which preserved and protected us when we cursed His name, and by which we have been supplied, and preserved, and blessed until now.

Again, they forgot the skillfulness of His Hand, as well as its strength. A person may have great physical strength, and yet not know how to use it; and if one be strong and ignorant, he may prove a very dangerous person. Our God's arm is an almighty one, and His wisdom is infinite and infallible. His great strength can never be employed against His people. He never guesses at anything, and He never chooses as we express it, the lesser of two evils. He is always right, and He always has been so. However mysterious His conduct may have been, and however deep the wonders of His providence may have proved, the keenest-sighted fiend has never yet detected a fault or a blemish in His character or His government. Hell has watched His hand, and would be glad to find an error in God's conduct and operations; but He goes on working in a sovereign manner, and almightiness pursues an infinitely wise course. Has it not been so in your experience and mine? As I said last Tuesday, when preaching on an anniversary occasion at Gravesend, had I been permitted to have my way, I should now have been at Meopham, and not have settled in London at all; but my ways are not the ways of the Lord, neither are my thoughts His thoughts. Could I

have had my way and have frustrated the purposes of God in that particular, I should have done the people in that place no good, and they would have done me none. Oh! It is best as it is; and, therefore, let us not forget the skillfulness of the hand of the Lord our God. How marvelously He worked when the first rank of the children of Israel were at the edge of the water, at the Red Sea. Perhaps the feet of the foremost were almost in the water, when God said to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward although at that moment there was no way for them to do so. They were to take God at His word, and as they went forward the waters were divided for them. Almighty power made a path, and infinite wisdom and skill guided the operations of God's hand and the people found a new way, a right way, an unexpected way, a safe way, a marvelous way, because it was made by the wonder-working hand of God : yet they remembered not His hand.

Again, they forgot the fullness of His hand. Not only its omnipotence and skillfulness but what was in it? What was in God's hand, then? And what is in it now? A sword was then in it, and a sword is there now. Joshua said, when a mysterious being appeared before Him with a drawn sword in His hand, "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?" and he soon received a satisfactory answer to his question. Your God has a drawn sword, not to smite you with, but your enemies. In another respect He is represented as having a sword girded upon His thigh. He has not done fighting yet, but has other blows to strike, other foes to destroy, other systems to cast

down, and other conquering work to do. There is sword in God's hand, which He will bring down upon Idumea, and upon all the enemies of His church and people. Remember that He holds a sword. What else? He has a rod as well as a sword in His hand. "Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. And who is the rod for? Not for the devil, but for the children of God; for whilst it is His intention to smite His enemies with the sword, it is His purpose to chastise His people with a rod. You do not believe this, perhaps. I have had hearers in this place occasionally, who were not believers in Divine chastisement. This I cannot help; for I do not consider when I enter the pulpit, or am in it, what my hearers believe or what they do not believe. I believe in Divine chastisement, and that God's hand holds a rod as well as a sword. I have some experience in this direction, for I have been chastised again and again, and I hope the Lord will never leave me to myself in this respect. Do not forget, then, the sword; and do not forget the rod. What else is there in His hand? "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full of mixture." How large this cup is I cannot tell; but "He poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." But remember there was a cup in God's hand when the dear Redeemer was in Gethsemane; and the Saviour emptied it. Remember also the cup of salvation which is in God's hand. What shall I render unto Him? " I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Remember His hands are full of blessing, and every morning He comes into our rooms and fills our cups. Day by day, we receive blessings undeserved. Do you always

think of this? Israel remembered not that His hands were full of blessings.

Then again His hand is a 'bountiful one. It is ever open. "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." As the God of providence, He blesses the earth, and satisfies the desire of every living thing; for who can have temporal good without the goodness of God? And He has a right to supply from nature the ordinary wants of His people and others. And then, He supplies His people from that mediatorial fullness which it hath pleased Him should dwell in His beloved Son. From that immeasurably deep fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. Do not be afraid, for, Paul says, "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Thus we have God's upraised hand denoting His promise and His oath, the almightiness of His hand, the skillfulness of His hand, the fullness of His hand, and His perpetual bounty.

*Thus far we've proved the promise good,  
Which Jesus ratified with blood."*

Now, a word, and only a word, on the day indicated in the text. "They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy." I have selected this text because I trust it was applied to my mind by the Spirit; but when it came to me these two points especially impressed my heart,—the hand, and the day. Both

were forgotten by the children of Israel, and both are forgotten in a measure by the Lord's people now. The day they remembered not. Well, what is there in a day? Very much, for first, it was the appointed day, and they forgot that; you have not forgotten the portion I read at the commencement of the service to-night, {Genesis. 15}. Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them four hundred years." A date was given, given by God, whose strong hand was forgotten. "They shall afflict them four hundred years; and I will judge that nation, and then bring out thy seed with great substance." Then mark in the 12th of Exodus what the Holy Ghost says, "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred years, even on the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt." They forgot that day, and the hand that brought them out; and that very day, according to God's word, He delivered them. The deep affliction of Israel did not induce God to go there before He was due; and the hostility and opposition of Pharaoh did not prevent Him from going when He was due. When, therefore, the hands of the clock, as it were, pointed at the very time God had indicated, He was there, with His high hand and out stretched arm, and delivered His people. Our deliverances are appointed and God will come at the self-same time. Let us never forget what a hand we have to work for us, and that the operations of God's hand are all timed. Again, that day was their birthday, as a nation. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." Their deliverance from Egypt changed the beginning of their year. They did not live until God

brought them out of Egypt. Their national life then commenced. And you and I did not live before we were born again, and when the new birth took place we commenced to live for God, and to live for ever. Let us not forget that day, nor the hand that regenerated us, and the fact that when we were born again, we came forth as God's children and as new creatures, to live a new life for ever and ever. We then commenced our journey to Canaan, so did they? This was the morning of our spiritual life; and we sometimes sing,

*"Thus far on our way to Zion,  
We through grace divine are come;  
And the God whom we rely on,  
Soon will bid us welcome home."*

Do not forget the time when you started for heaven, though like many of God's dear people, you may not be able to indicate the exact period when the work of grace was commenced ; and do not forget the strong almighty hand which was then raised for your defense.

And lastly, this was the day of Divine appropriation; for God said, The people in that iron furnace of Egypt are Mine, and I will go and deliver them, because they Mine. Relationship precedes deliverance, and deliverance proves our covenant relation to God.

Time will not admit of our entering upon the third point, the fact asserted, They remembered not the great deliverance the Lord

wrought for them ; and although we also are prone to forget, can we not say and sing;

*"O bless the Lord, my soul;  
Nor let His mercies lie  
Forgotten in un-thankfulness,  
And without praises die.  
His wondrous works and ways,  
He made by Moses known;  
But sent the world His truth and grace,  
By His beloved Son."*

The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.