

**Sermon preached at St David's Bridge, Cranbrook  
By Pastor Rowland Wheatley  
On Lord's Day 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020**

Reading: Lamentations 3 v 1-58

**Text: Lamentations 3 v 37 "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?"**

Jeremiah is living in the time when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and he saw the desolations of Jerusalem. It was some 19 years from when Nebuchadnezzar first came, carried away some of the captives, including Daniel, and then left others to care for the land. But those kings that he set over the land they rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah was used to warn them, to exhort them, to be submissive to what he saw, and rightly testified, was God's chastening hand, God's dealing with them. He exhorted them to be submissive under it. And it is a good lesson for us as well; to be submissive under the Lord's chastening and correcting hand. You would not think if we had a child that was being corrected, if they were refusing to bow, if they were refusing to be affected by it, and sought to shrug it off and just to go

on, that that would be a sign of a child that was profiting by chastened.

And we should also look at that which is happening in our land as well, what we have round about us, and recognising it as the Lord's just hand and to bow before the Lord, however much that may be affecting us.

We may be in a similar situation to Jeremiah. Jeremiah was walking out that time that some fourteen hundred years before, when the children of Israel came into the Promised Land, Moses warned them would come in the latter days. They would depart from the Lord, they would depart from Him and He would carry them away captive. He would deal with them, he would chasten them. And many times through their history, through those eight hundred and twenty-one years they were brought through shorter periods of captivity, but they did not hearken, they did not hear, and now comes the time when the Lord will bring them into captivity and the Temple shall be destroyed; and dear Jeremiah is seeing all of this happening.

He also had some wonderful prophecies that they should be brought back from Babylon, that again land

would be bought and sold in that land, he had that prospect. But the thing that he was going through here, he very much felt that. Jeremiah was sharing in the sorrows of his people. However much Jeremiah may have served the Lord and feared Him and was speaking on the Lord's behalf, he was right in with his people. And it was the same with Daniel. Daniel was carried away into Babylon. Those of the Lord's people, Ezekiel, prophesying to Babylon in captivity, and the Lord's dear people they share with this.

In the last wars then it affected those that served the Lord and those that did not. It didn't make any distinctions in that way. The rationing it affected all; the bombing it affected all. Those things that are coming upon us now then it touches those that fear the Lord and those who have no thought at all for the Lord. And Jeremiah is one of those here and he greatly feels what is going on, and he bewails his calamity. The first 18 verses in this chapter he is bewailing his condition. He says "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath". He clearly sees the wrath and rod of the Lord. And you can read in this first part of this chapter how he feels to be "set in dark places". The Lord has hedged him about, he cannot get out. When he cries and shouts "he shutteth out

my prayer”. You would think in this time that the Lord would give his dear people access in prayer, that He would help him, that He wouldn’t hide His face from him in that way; but even in this way it is affecting him, it is touching him.

Dear friends don’t be surprised if we feel the same through these things here. It is touching us and when we try to pray, when we cry to the Lord, to feel that those ways are shut up. Sometimes it is not so and we bless the Lord when we have that access and sweet savour and blessing. But we have this picture of Jeremiah in his position and he says in verse 17 “thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity”.

I will just say this, that there is so much in this chapter that we can get little glimpses of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was more afflicted than any man. They cast Him into the dungeon, they cast a stone upon Him. The path that He was to walk in was for His church and for His people; and Jeremiah and the things that he speaks here points to those sufferings of the dear Man of God the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer for his sins, be more afflicted than any man, and should bear in His body the sins of His church, His

people. They “hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53 v 6). May we always remember that. If you and I escape the eternal, sovereign judgements of God for our sin, then those sins have been laid upon the Lord. He has felt the weight of them all, bowed down, sweating great drops in Gethsemane, crying out upon the cross “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15 v 34), and when we come into these paths like Jeremiah we are to look and we are to remember the Lord. We are to think of that which he went through “they all forsook him, and fled” (Mark 14 v 50). And Jeremiah here speaks of being in this lonely path, a lonely voice, in the midst of a crooked generation. The Lord “came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1 v 11) and in that great work on Calvary there were His people “Away with him, away with him” (John 19 v 15) “Crucify him, crucify him” (John 19 v 6) as the Lord prayed “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23 v 34). So Jeremiah he bewails his condition, the things that he is actually going through here.

Now I point out that there is a great difference between bewailing our condition and complaining actually of God Himself and laying those charges against God. We think of what is written in Psalm 78,

and this is referring to the children of Israel when they were going through the wilderness before they came into the Promised Land, and in Psalm 78 v 17-19 we read “They sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God.” So this is not just murmuring, this is not just feeling the things that they are passing through, they are actually speaking against God. “They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?” How different it would have been if they had said “Behold he smote the rock, the waters gushed out, he can give bread also, he can provide flesh, he is a refuge for us, he is our help”. How believing that is to view the Lord in that way instead of speaking against Him and slighting His power, His might, as if “is He able to do it at all”. So there is a difference. And in the things that we pass through, yes we may complain, we may have lamentation like Jeremiah, but may we never insinuate that the Lord has not power, or might, or love, or compassion, or He has not justly done what He has

done. May we always remember that the Lord is a good God, a merciful God.

And so Jeremiah then he comes in verse 21 to recall to mind a source of hope, and it does well for us to remember this in our present distress in this land, with the Coronavirus or with the uncertainties that are around us in every household. He says ""This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope". And those verses that follow, they are most blessed verses; "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not". That is true today, as it was yesterday. "They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness". They are especially for those that know that they are the Lord's people, and be able to say "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him". Dear friends, may we not be quick to cast away our hope and refuge in the Lord. You know, with a child, if a child is running around and they are even doing something that has been forbidden them then they fall over, they get injured, they are crying, they flee to their parent; they go to the parent, and they don't say "are you really my mother; are you really my father; are you really my parent?" In that time of distress and need they just flee to that refuge and the one that has fed them, watched over them,

kept them, looked after them. And this is what Jeremiah recalls to mind. “The LORD is good” he says “unto them that wait for him”; wait for him dear soul. “To the soul that seeketh him”; seek him poor soul. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD”; dear friends may we do both of these things. “Hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD”. And the younger ones, the children and young people “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth”. These are blessed words. They are encouraging words, strengthening words, that Jeremiah recalls to mind. He says “therefore have I hope”.

But when we come to our text he clearly sees the deserved hand of the Lord. “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” And we may say in the subject, the word that is before us here, nothing happens without God’s express permission. “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?”

***I want to look, with the Lord’s help, at three points.***

**Firstly, the sovereignty of God that is set forth here;**



**Secondly**, the question that is begun in our text “Who is he?”, “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” and some of those examples from the Word of God where there has been a saying that something shall come to pass and it has not, because it has not been the sovereign will of God; then,

**Thirdly, irresistible grace.** The providence and grace of God, this text in relation to the Lord’s work when he calls His people by grace and works savingly in their heart. “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” Who is he that saith “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways” (Job 21 v 14) when the Lord says “arrest that man; arrest that woman; convert them; save them”. Irresistible grace.

**But firstly, the sovereignty of God.** There is no higher authority than God. When the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush and Moses asked Him His name He said, “I AM THAT I AM” (Deuteronomy 3 v 14). And in John chapter 10 our Lord many times refers to Himself as the “I am”. “I am the good shepherd”. He is one who has not had beginning or

ending and who is subject to none other, accountable to none other than Himself, to His Holiness, His Faithfulness; to have reference to none other at all. We read in Hebrews chapter 2 v10 “For it became him” and this is a description of Him “for whom are all things, and by whom are all things”; what a description! All things are for God, and all things are by God. “in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation [that is Jesus] perfect through sufferings”. All things were created for God and for His honour and glory and His people, especially this people, “have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise” (Isaiah 43 v 21). The heavens, they “declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19 v 1), they shew forth His praise, His majesty, His might. When God would speak to Job and bring Job to be humbled before His almighty hand, as Job in his great affliction was seeking to justify himself rather than God, and the Lord took the way of pointing Job to all that He had created; and He takes him in chapter 38 especially (and there are other chapters later on as well that deal with this) he says in verse 4 “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” and then in verse 11, what the Lord says of the waves of the sea, how they don’t come

over the land, “hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” You know, I apply that to the present plague. The Lord knows how to restrain it; to go so far and no further is in the Lord’s hand. And Job was brought to see that with the sea. You go down and you see the sea, how the waves beat upon the shore, smash upon the shore, and yet they just come to the sand, to the shore, to the cliff, and that is as far as they go and they recede back again. And God has set that decree over them. And then later on the Lord causing it to rain on the earth, verse 26, “where no man is; on the wilderness wherein there is no man”. Man has not anything to do with it, as to bringing that rain to water the earth. And then in verse 31 “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the reins of Orion?” Those are the constellations, the stars. Pleiades, those stars govern the spring. We are coming into spring. You see all of the trees that were looking dead, now they are all coming out into bud. Not a noise, not a sound, but could you go to one tree after another and try and stop it from coming out into bud? No, because the Lord has put in those influences of the stars, ordered it, decreed it, and it comes to pass. Orion is that which governs the winter months, the

cold. You can't change the seasons. They have been ordered by God and they shall continue whilst this world continues. These things were set before Job so that Job was brought lower and lower. He says "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

As recorded in God's Word, the way the Lord dealt with Job for our instruction, is to make man as small; man is helpless before these things that God does. And may we be very clear on this, the things that happen in this world, they do not happen just by chance; to have a fatalistic attitude, what will be will be, it just happens, there is no orderer, no governor, there is nothing in control at all: or on the other hand to say "well, there is an evil influence in this world, it is Satan, and these things they come from Satan's hand and the God that made the heavens and the earth He is powerless to stop them, he is helpless, he must look on in helplessness while Satan has his way and brings these things.

We are not to think that that should be the case that Satan is stronger and mightier than the Lord, or some other power whatever it may be. And we are not to

think as well that God has left it to man. He has made the creation, He has set in order nature, and He has given it to man and man must arrange it as best he can. Yes, He has given it to man to dress the gardens and look after the world, but it is not into man's hands.

We are to be responsible stewards and do that which honours and glorifies God, but the things that happen and the destiny of this planet and this world is not in man's hands, not in kings. The Lord is the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19 v 16). "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Proverbs 8 v 15). The Lord is a sovereign God that does not have to give account of any of His matters. He is the author of morality. He is not to be put in the bar of man's morality and what man thinks is right or wrong. The commandments are given by God, the right and wrong is ordered by God and every one of us one day shall stand before the judgement seat of God to give an account. Not putting God in the dock. He is the Judge and we shall stand before Him, and He is a sovereign God. There is no higher court, no higher course of recourse than to God himself, and we are to hold that so clear. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" When the Lord

has set forth His command, then His command is with authority and power. We had it this morning where the Lord stood in the boat and he rebuked the winds and the waves and there was a great calm, “What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him” (Luke 8 v 25). This sovereign God, who can choose when to bring those waves, when to still them, He is sovereign Lord of all. May we remember this in this present dispensation and present time, and humble ourselves before His almighty and His sovereign hand.

**But secondly, who is He?** I want to look at some examples from the Word of God.

We go back to the book of Job. We have the account there of how Job was so afflicted and the reason why. We read that the Lord asked Satan “hast thou considered my servant Job?” (Job 1 v 8) that he was an upright man, and Satan had an answer to this, Yes Job might be perfect and an upright man (that is not perfect as sinless, but as upright as a poor sinner can be in serving the Lord and fearing the Lord and eschewing, or hating, evil) and Satan answers “Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1 v 9). And he says “you

have put a hedge about him, you have protected him, you have protected his goods, you have protected his health, you have given him every blessing, of course he serves you. You take away those things and he will curse thee to thy face.” So God gave Satan permission to take away those things, to see if what Satan was saying was true. And all of those things happened in that first chapter of Job. And dear Job, one thing after another; he has the Sabeans coming upon his oxen and taking them all away; he has the fire that’s come from heaven consuming up the sheep and the servants; he has the camels all carried off with the Chaldeans and the servants slain; and he has another messenger coming and saying that his sons and daughters were drinking wine in the eldest brother’s house and a great wind came from the wilderness, smote it and destroyed them all. One thing after another. And dear Job, he falls down to the ground and he worships the Lord. He said “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” (Job 1 v 21 & 22) And then Satan came again and said, “Well, you have touched Job’s outward things but all of a man’s

life will he give for his health or his life. So, take away his health, his strength". And so the Lord gave Satan permission to do that, but charged him "but save his life" (Job 2 v6). Thus far and no further. Satan had to ask permission before he could do anything in Job's life, and in the lives of his family and his servants, and his oxen and his sheep. The Lord is over Satan. Satan is a mighty foe. Yes "we wrestle .... against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6 v 12) but God is the almighty God. And you know, although Job went through all of this, what was to be proved in this was that the reason why Job feared the Lord was because of the grace of God in his heart and the Lord sustained that faith that he had and that trust in the Lord, and he did not serve God for all of these things that God had given him.

You know many, many that will have a form of religion when things are nice and going well, yes they will follow and they will serve the Lord. But when things go wrong then they are offended and they will say "I thought God was a God of love, and now He is not I am not going to serve Him. I have served the Lord, I have gone to church, I have gone to chapel, I have done what's right; now I'm afflicted, now I have these



trials, now I have lost my job, now these things are happening. If this is the God of the Bible then I don't want to have anything to do with Him." And Satan has had six thousand years' experience in dealing with men like that, and he knows for the most part of men, in fact all of men, except by God's grace, except by the strength that God gives His people, that is the reaction. They would turn against God. They would rebel against Him for that which He does. We read in the Revelation of the last day, those that are afflicted in those times, that they shall not bow or humble before the Lord, but fight against Him.

It is a great mercy, a great blessing, if when adversity, troubles and trials come, "and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3 v 13), that the Lord is pleased to give us grace to bow before God; humble ourselves before His hand. But may we learn from this account with the question of our text "Who is he?" "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Satan, he says "You do this; you take away these things of Job, he will curse thee; he will prove to be a reprobate." Did it come to pass? If Satan wished to take away Job's life, did it come to pass? It couldn't. All that Satan did was permitted of the Lord. You may remember that

the latter end of Job was better than his beginning. The Lord truly blessed him. But it did not take away the greatness of the trial, the bereavements, the sorrows that he had right through that passage.

“Who is he?” In the book of Esther we have the case of Haman. Haman, he was the Jews enemy, he hated the Jews. Mordecai didn’t bow down to him and reverence him, and he thought scorn just to touch him, he wanted to destroy all of the Jews and we read from the book of Esther chapter 3 verses 8 and 9 Haman says to King Ahasuerus about this certain people that have different laws. He said “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws (*may it never be said of us that we do not keep the king’s laws, unless contrary to the law of God*): therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed.” Well, the king gave that permission. The king said unto Haman “the silver is given to thee (*that he offered to give to the king*), the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.” (verse 11)

Many will look upon the Christian in that way. Their laws are diverse, they are separate from all men. Well, we are bidden to be subject to those in authority, the powers that be, that are ordained of God. It is only where it is said that “We ought to obey God rather than man (Acts 5 v 29), where man’s decrees go contrary against God’s, that we stand against it. And so we have Haman determining here to destroy the Jews, which no doubt were the most loyal, the best subjects in the land, but they did not bow before Haman, and Haman hated that. But did Haman get his way? Did he destroy the Jews? “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” Already, before Haman did this, God had put Esther in the position as queen. We had this a little while ago didn’t we? “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4 v 14) And it was overturned. The Jews were delivered. They were saved. It was a great deliverance. The days of Purim, they recognised this wonderful deliverance that God gave on Queen Esther’s intercession to the king, so that the letters of the sentence of death were reversed to a sentence of life. And that is the Gospel; taking away the sentence of death and giving the sentence of life. The Gospel. The

Law condemns, the Gospel gives life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have then a case when Assyria came up against the ten tribes. He took them away and then sought to take Judah and Jerusalem. This was in the time of Hezekiah, and we read in Isaiah chapter 36 of how Sennacherib the king of the Assyrians sent Rabshakeh to speak, to rail upon, those of the Jews. And we have the account of what was said, and he says that he is going to take them all away. Rabshakeh cries with a loud voice and he rails against them and says “I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.” And he says “Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us”, and he cites all the other gods of the other lands that they didn’t deliver them out of their hand. But did what Rabshakeh say come to pass? Was Judah destroyed? No. And we read in chapter 37 and verse 33 “Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a back against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return.” “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?”

We could speak of Nebuchadnezzar and the burning, fiery furnace, later on the seven years that he had losing his mind, and afterwards at the end of the time he comes and speaks so clearly (the last thing actually that we read about Nebuchadnezzar), lifting up his eyes and he says how that he “blessed the most high...praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” How he blessed him; blessed the God of heaven and earth.

But we pass on to dear Peter. When our Lord started to speak of His sufferings, His death and what He should accomplish at Jerusalem, Peter took Him and said “this shall not be unto thee” (Matthew 16 v 22). The Lord rebuked him. He said “Get thee behind me, Satan.....thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those things that be of men.” (Matthew 16 v 23) Satan speaking, as it were, through Peter that he would stop Him; stop the Lord from going to Calvary, bruising Satan’s head, bringing about the redemption

of all the people of God. Was Peter able to stop the Lord? “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” No, Peter doesn’t get his will, nor does Satan at all.

What about those when our Lord was being taken and they had the sword? “Put up thy sword into the sheath” (John 18 v11). “Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (*72 thousand angels*) But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled..?” (Matthew 26 v 53 &54) This is what must come to pass. It cannot be stopped.

And what about then the sealing of the stone when He died? They said, “He said he would rise from the dead”. Well seal the stone; make sure He doesn’t. Set a watch. “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” There was an earthquake. The men became as dead men. The Lord rose from the dead. An angel came down and rolled away the stone, so that you could see that tomb was empty. And those beautiful words that we read as Peter preaches in Acts 2, and he says in verse 23, “Him (*that is the Lord Jesus Christ*), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye

have taken, and by wicked hand have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” The beautiful words that he says there before them. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2 v 36) The Spirit convicted them of their sin. The Lord gave them that sweet promise “unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (verse 39) There is no salvation in any other, but in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished, and what He has done at Calvary. And “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” The Lord had commanded them, the prophets all showed that Christ should suffer and rise again the third day from the dead, and that He should then ascend up into heaven, and that in His name should be life, and belief in His name.

**Well, I want to come then to our third point; the irresistible grace of God.** That which the Lord has done at Calvary in putting away the sins of His people,

that which He has done for them is to be made known to them and realised in this life.

The Lord has appointed when everyone is born into this world. He has appointed for His people when they shall be born again of the Spirit, when they shall be given a new nature, when they shall be given spiritual life. And “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass”, when the Lord commands that time? Many of the Lord’s people, myself included, we very actively, in our lives and in our thoughts and in our words, declared that we did not and would not “have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19 v4). We desired our own way, we planned our own lives and it was having no hope, and without God in the world (Ephesians 2 v 12). but blessed be the Lord for such a word as our text “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” The Lord commands His people to repent. He brings them to it. He accomplishes it. He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel. He said to Saul of Tarsus, who was so far fighting the Lord, hailing men and women to prison, a Pharisee of the Pharisees; He met with him on the Damascus road when he was in the middle of his course of hailing men and women to prison and He stopped him there, and spoke to him from heaven.



“Who art thou Lord? ...I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9 v5). I have no doubt that he had pricks of conscience and thoughts that “maybe these people who I am persecuting are right. Maybe it is right, the Gospel; maybe there is some truth in it”. And there may be some that may hear me this day that are thinking that too. Maybe there is truth in the things of God. Maybe the Lord is a sovereign. Maybe those things that keep happening in my life, the Lord is governing those things, the things that go wrong, the things that have a voice in them, the things that happen, and our conscience says listen, listen to that voice; then bow before the Lord. One of our hymns, hymn 76, speaks of that way that man is determined to go. It begins:

“There is a period known to God  
When all his sheep, redeemed by blood,  
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,  
Turn to the fold, and enter in.”

It goes on:

“At peace with hell, with God at war,  
In sin’s dark maze they wander far,  
Indulge their lust, and still go on

As far from God as sheep can run.”

And it speaks of when even wisdom calls they just stop  
their ear and

“Judgments nor mercies ne’er can sway  
Their roving feet to wisdoms way.”

But then we have a time that is:

“Glory to God, they ne’er shall rove  
Beyond the limits of his love;  
Fenced with Jehovah’s *shalls* and *wills*,  
Firm as the everlasting hills.

The appointed time rolls on apace,  
Not to propose but call by grace;  
To change the heart, renew the will,  
And turn the feet to Zion’s hill.”

Irresistible grace. It cannot be stopped at the Lord’s  
appointed time.

The Lord was going in the way and Zacchaeus desired  
to see Him, who He was, and he was low of stature. He  
climbs up into a sycamore tree to see him, and the  
Lord comes by and He stops under that tree and He  
looks up, and He calls him by name. How did the Lord  
know he was there? How did He know his name? He  
said “Zacchaeus....come down for to day I must abide

at thy house.” (Luke 19 v 5) There was an appointment. Zacchaeus did not know and God did know. The Lord knew. And that is the Lord’s hand and the Lord’s work. And it is the sovereign work, irresistible work of God in calling His people.

John Newton had been brought up to the age of seven years of age with his dear mother, before she died, and she taught him the truths of God. And then she died and he went off and was the most rebellious of people, drunken and in the slave trade, a slave master, and yet the Lord was pleased in a great storm in the sea to bring him into great concern of soul, make him remember what he had learned, heard in his childhood. And the Lord called him. Many of our hymns are written by John Newton about the grace of God; that which called him. The free sovereign grace of God; the irresistible grace of God. The sovereignty of God in the saving and calling of sinners. And in everything in our lives, the work that He does in our souls, the blessing that He blesses through the Word of God, through the preaching; and that which happens to us in our lives, the sicknesses, the trials, the providences, the jobs that we have, the schooling (and those of you young people that may be having the exams postponed and different things are

happening in your lives), those things are all ordered by God.

“My life’s minutest circumstance is subject to his eye” (Hymn 70 - Gadsby’s).

And we are assured in Romans chapter 8 “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Verse 28) And it is a blessed thing to see the Lord’s purposes “ripening fast, unfolding every hour”, and that it be to that end, to bring our souls back to Him, away from the world, away from sins and back unto Him. We have left our first love and it is a blessed thing to be brought into communion with Him again. May we bless the Lord for irresistible grace.

“Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” The Lord has commanded salvation. He has commanded the salvation of His people. It is certain and it is sure. And in every tribulation and in every trouble they also are under the command of God. A good God. A gracious God. A God who will turn it about to His honour and glory, and the salvation of His people.

The Lord bless this word to us. Amen.