

The Ways and Dealings of God

by J.C. Philpot

J.C. Philpot's sermon explores how God's mysterious dealings often lead to profound wisdom and grace, as illustrated through historical figures like Luther, Bunyan, and Rutherford.

Scripture: Psalm 37:23, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 55:8, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "God's Providence", "Divine Sovereignty"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the mysterious ways and dealings of God with His people, how they may seem shrouded in mystery at first but ultimately reveal His perfect wisdom, mercy, and grace. Through examples like Luther's time in Wartburg, Bunyan's imprisonment leading to 'Grace Abounding' and 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and Rutherford's exile in Aberdeen resulting in powerful letters, Philpot highlights how God's providence and grace work in ways beyond human understanding, often using trials and hardships to bring about greater blessings and advancements in His kingdom.

Transcript

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The ways and dealings of God with his people, in providence and in grace, are usually in the outset shrouded in mystery, and yet in the end shine resplendently forth as stamped with the most perfect wisdom, mercy, and grace.

When Luther, on his return from the Diet of Worms, was seized by armed men in masks, and carried off to the lonely castle of Wartburg, it seemed as if his life and work were both about to be suddenly extinguished. The consternation of his friends was almost unparalleled. "A cry of grief," says D'Aubigne, "resounded through Germany. Luther has fallen into the hands of his enemies." But in that quiet retreat, hidden alike from friend and foe, he had time and opportunity to translate the Scriptures into his native language, and thus deal Rome a far heavier blow, and advance the cause of God a thousand times more than if he had been permitted again without molestation to occupy his pulpit at Wittenberg.

When Bunyan was haled to prison, and his labors in the gospel were thus suddenly and violently brought to a close, this heavy stroke would doubtless appear, both to himself and his attached people, an utter extinguishment of his light and usefulness. But should we have had his "Grace Abounding," or his

"Pilgrim's Progress," if it had not been for his gloomy cell in Bedford Jail? Has not the church of God the greatest reason to bless the wisdom of the Most High in permitting ungodly men to triumph for a season? For though they might stop his tongue which could not reach hundreds, they set loose a pen which has been blessed to thousands.

When Rutherford was torn from his beloved Anwoth, and ordered to confine himself to Aberdeen; when his tongue was thus forcibly silenced, and he forbidden to speak in the name of his dearest Lord, what a gloom it cast over his soul, what a dark cloud gathered over his fondest hopes. He had, he says, "but one joy," that of preaching the gospel, and that gone, all seemed gone. But where would have been the richest portion of his letters but for his imprisonment? His ministry at Anwoth, however powerful in itself or at the time abundantly blessed, was restricted to a small village and to a scanty district; and, however it might be subsequently enlarged by his visiting other places, was necessarily confined to that day and generation. So fully, also, was he there occupied, as we have already seen, with the labors of his ministry, that the use of his pen in private correspondence must have been greatly limited. But at Aberdeen not only had he abundant leisure to write to his numerous friends, but his very trials there and deliverances, his exercises and blessings, furnished his heart with matter suitable and edifying to the people of God in all generations; and his pen was thus made the pen of a ready writer, not only for the narrow circle of a few Scottish friends, but for numbers then unborn. The light placed on this candlestick could not be hidden. Its rays have shone far and wide beyond the Scottish border; and for the last 200 years have these powerful letters been as goads to stir up living souls to take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

No, even as regards that very flock which then lay so near to his heart--his church and congregation at Anwoth--we may well believe that the life and power with which his letters to them were impregnated, and to which his forced absence doubtless instrumentally much contributed, might, and probably were, more blessed to them than his preached discourses. The love and affection felt towards him, enhanced by his persecutions and exile for their sake, would make his letters eagerly read by those to whom they were addressed; from their real worth and intrinsic excellence they would be passed from hand to hand and religiously preserved, as their being at this day extant abundantly shows; their heavenly warmth might kindle a flame in many a cold heart, and their force and energy stir up many a sluggish bosom, which had remained dull and unmoved under the sound of his voice; and thus his letters might be more blessed even at Anwoth than his sermons, and his absence be more valuable than his presence. All this we can now clearly see and can admire it in the wisdom of God.

It argues, in our judgment, a great narrowness of mind, as well as extreme ignorance of the diversified dealings of God in providence and grace, to chalk out a certain rigid line for his saints and servants to walk in--a line, that is, more narrow and precise than the Scriptures warrant--and then condemn or cut them off because their every step does not move in exact accordance with it.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/the-ways-and-dealings-of-god/>

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