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***"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH  
ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."***  
COL.3.1

***THE LORD'S HINDRANCES.***

***An Address (revised)***

***At 65, St. Mary Axe,***

***12<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1915***

***by***

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THE LORD'S HINDRANCES.

An Address by Mr. P.W.Heward,  
At 65, St. Mary Axe, 12th Feb.1915.

This evening, beloved friends, we are to consider the LORD'S hindrances. Shall we first read a precious passage in Acts 16?

This may well begin our subject. It makes evident that God sometimes hinders. Yes, beloved friends, there are Scriptural examples of hindrances placed in the way by God Himself, and ALL such trials are permitted by Him in perfect wisdom. We must not imagine with regard to our own lives that difficulties are merely, or MAINLY, of the the world, the flesh, and the devil. God sometimes blocks up our path, and hedges it about with a purpose of infinite love. It is delightful to realise that God does everything at the right time. You remember the words of Ecclesiastes, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven", and if this be so under the heaven, much more is it evident that with respect to heavenly things our God has a plan. There is no mere chance, there are no mere accidents with Him. Our beloved Lord was desired by His mother to meet the need at that marriage feast. He said, Mine hour is not yet. Again and again the people tried to arrest Him, but His hour was not come. Thus were they hindered, thus were they held back. Why? When the fulness of time came Christ was born, and equally when the fulness of time came Christ died, not one day earlier, not one day later. The Pharisaic plan was "Not on the feast day". <sup>The Divine purpose was - "on the feast day"</sup> God thus marks Himself out as the One Who appoints and arranges the most suitable time. Hence we have many hindrances, as well as many clearly seen encouragements, brought before us in Scripture. The case of Acts 16 is very remarkable, for we see there that Paul had been ministering the Word in various parts, and naturally he felt a desire to have no obstacle in the way of further ministry, and then to be shut out from Asia, and next to be stopped from Bithynia! A map will show you he was shut up between two districts. He could not go south, nor could he journey to the north east. He was thus forced forward as it were toward Troas, and Troas leads to Europe. It is the end of Asia, and it seems to be jutting forth there as if to unite with Europe. We may be sure of this that if God closes Asia, and keeps us out of Bitynia, He has a Macedonia. There are always blessings when there is confidence in Him, but there MUST be testing hindrances, and when Paul reached Macedonia he still found hindrances. First, there were apparently no Jewish believers in the city, apart from a few women discovered later. Secondly, when he was faithfully continuing in prayer with the other of the Lord's people, a certain possessed damsel interfered, and when he commanded the evil spirit to go forth he was taken prisoner by the angered masters, put in the inner prison, and it seemed as though the work was shut up to a very narrow space. It was THEN that God opened the door. It was then that not only literally but spiritually there was a wondrous throwing aside of the hindrance. But up to a point the Lord hindered. The Lord often brings us very low that He may lift us very high, and he shuts many doors that we may keep along the corridor of His will till we reach the goal which He has marked out for us. We have another example of the Lord's overruling of hindrances in Rom.1. The apostle says in verse 11, I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end ye may be established, and he adds in verse 13, Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you but was hindered hitherto. Yes, Paul's desire to go to Rome, was hindered. Was God outside this? By no means. There was a reason why Paul was hindered. WE think Rome is a suitable place. God says, "Not yet", cf. Ch. 15. 22 of the same epistle, "For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you". Again we have a Divine overruling in 1 Thess.2,16. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us. *(no paragraph break should be here, fa)* You may say, What has that to do with the Lord's hindrance? Much, for the Lord is Almighty, but He permits that Satan should hinder His people. He permits that doors should be closed. He can overrule the Philippian jailors and Philippian rulers to shut up His people till

an appointed time. God is never too early. God is never too late. Yes, beloved friends, there are many examples in Scripture to bring before us this thought. God has an appointed time for His people to act, and till then He will hinder them. Perhaps I might add one example from an earlier dispensation. David wished to build a house for the Lord. Thou didst well, said the Lord that it was in thine heart, notwithstanding thou shalt not. The Lord hindered David in that case, and gave the privilege to Solomon, David's son. We may do well to have something in our hearts, and yet the Lord may not allow us to carry it out. This is a solemn view of the Christian life, and draws us back from setting our heart on anything. We must only set our hearts on the Lord's will. In the words of James 4 we ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But while I am speaking of the Lord's hindrances let me just utter a word of caution. We find going back to the earlier Scriptures, in Gen. 24, that the servant of Abraham made the remark, "Hinder me not". He was speaking of the remarkable manner in which the Lord had prospered his way, and brought him to the house of a near relative, and, as he looked on God's gracious work, he said, Hinder me not. The child of God must be willing for the Lord's hindrances, but willing for no other hindrances. Let us lay aside EVERY weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. If the Lord says, Stand still, we must stand still; but if the flesh says, Stand still, we must run on. It is deeply important not to yield to human tendencies, and human impulses, with respect to this. I am persuaded that there are some temperaments who think the door is closed when the Lord has not closed it. Just as there are those who will try and open the door when the Lord HAS closed it. Let us not be among those who will soon settle down and be convinced that the door is closed. Some may act thus through sloth. <sup>There is always a lion in the street for a slothful man</sup> There is always something in the way of obedience. Difficulties are very numerous if we want to see them. Wishes have the quickest manufactories. Wonderously quick are we to suggest obstacles when we want to suggest obstacles. We are told that corruption is in the world through a desire, and desires are intensely dangerous. In this connection, moreover, I would again and again remind you, and myself also, that when the Lord has commanded anything there is a grave danger in holding back even for a little while. You remember the Ethiopian eunuch. His attitude is beautiful. See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? Now not only with respect to baptism, but with regard to every other act of obedience, what doth hinder? If the Lord has commanded, let us not put difficulties in the way. Let us be willing that the Lord should close our doors, but let us realise the Lord does not contradict the Lord. If He has appointed something, let us be very careful of those who dare to say He has not appointed it. Let us be very careful before we say our door is closed. I am quite aware that a child of God might be brought to know what salvation meant, in absolute isolation, and to know what obedience to the Lord involved, and to be unable (perhaps closed up in a prison house) to carry out the Lord's precious command as to the Lord's Supper but, though realising the Lord's hand in such extreme cases, and His perfect wisdom, I do think we need to be on our guard lest we should put hindrances in the way of that which the Lord has appointed. What doth hinder? I cannot say, I am sure the Lord hath called me to preach every evening in a certain street. I cannot produce Scripture for it, but I can produce Scripture for the Lord's arrangements that His people should pray daily, that they should wait on Him, and delight in Him. You follow what I mean. When the Lord has appointed anything, I am not to say the door is closed. When there are a hundred streets in which I may preach, it is nothing surprising if the Lord closes 90 of them or even 99. The Lord knows which to pick out and sometimes we learn best by having other things cut off.

We pass next to our second point, already partly anticipated. "The blessings of disappointments". I do not mean merely the blessing of disappointment, but the blessings which are associated with disappointment, Not that people like disappointment, - if they naturally like it, it ceases to be disappointment. They find disappointment painful, but that may be part of the blessing, or shall I rather say, that may be one of the BLESSINGS. There are often more blessings

wrapped up in trials than we realise. Some things seem to bring all the blessings on the outside, and when we get inside we are rather disappointed. Trials have an unpleasant exterior, but there is a very sweet centre to them, so that if we throw away the parcel because the outside package does not please us, we shall lose the jewels within. Trials are painfully wrapped up, but blessings are hidden inside, - the blessings of disappointments. May I suggest the first blessing is more realisation of what the Lord is, and more realisation of the supremacy of the Lord's will. If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. The child of God must avoid being "positive". The child of God is to be very truthful, the child of God is to be reliable. If he makes what we understand in the usual way as a "promise", he is earnestly to seek conformity with his promise, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed, but the child of God is not ABSOLUTE. The child of God avoids the very idea of continually using such words as, "I am positive". The child of God realises how little he is and how little he can do. If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. If the Lord wants "that", we do not want "this". If the Lord wants "this" we wish to avoid "that". But sometimes we can only enter into the "this" OR "that", and leave the Lord to take the choice, yet sometimes He chooses something else beyond those things of which we are thinking. If we select Justus and Matthias He may have Paul. In other words there may be a third alternative, and a thirtieth alternative. The most unlikely thing may be Divinely appointed. It is blessed to be disappointed enough to trust the Lord. Yet further disappointment teaches us patience. The majority of believers are impatient because they have such an easy time. Patience is only learnt in a spiritual laboratory. The theory of patience is not easily put into practice. Patience is not merely for essay writing, but for heart and life experience, and trials give lessons in patience. Disappointments test us. Sometimes LITTLE disappointments in quick succession, are more difficult to bear than great disappointments. They are sufficiently large to annoy, but not large enough to humble, unless we are walking CLOSELY with the Lord. Beloved friends, patience is very blessed. Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing. The Lord does not want impatient people, they dishonour Him. Furthermore, there is a wonderful blessing to a child of God closely associated with what I have already said, which is mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit, of Gal.5. The fruit of the Spirit begins with love, but what is the last evidence of the Divine working of God? Faith, meekness, TEMPERANCE. Now what is the word "Temperance"? It is holding in, or self-control. The climax of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Here is the witness against perfectness in the flesh. The believer is to live to the praise of the glory of God's grace, but he is to hold down something which is in him, which would interfere with his godly devotedness. He is to hold down, and hold in. The flesh, and trials are overruled to teach us self control. If we are disappointed, we shall know what self-control really means. Yes, beloved friends, there are many blessing in disappointment, and though it may appear as if hope deferred maketh the heart sick, yet it is also blessedly true that when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life, and we may well thank our gracious God for the trials He has permitted, in that oftentimes we have learned to trust Him more, and learned to trust ourselves less when we have been enveloped by these. You recollect the Scripture which says, He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls. What a mercy if He gives us not our request, but sends a spiritual fatness and fruitfulness into our lives.

Further, we do well to have thoughts on chastisement. What is chastisement? It is reproof, painful reproof from our allwise heavenly Father, with a perfect purpose. He chastens us that we may be partakers of His holiness. He chastens us that we may know more of Him. Chastening is not altogether pleasant, but God's gold and God's silver need refining. Chastisement is the appointed means. Hindrances are sometimes a chastisement, yes, we have in Scripture more than hindrances. God sometimes entirely removes something on which one has set his or her heart, that there may be a holy realisation of one's own loss and failure in this way. Moses when in the land of Midian called his son Gershom. "A stranger THERE" as if to take the Palestine standpoint long before he reached Palestine. The delight of his heart was that he would see the land which God had promised to give Israel, and God kept him alive, not only 80 years, but many more years, and it looked as though God was keeping him alive

to grant him his request to see the land, but we know how sin came in, which ever interrupts, and we find strikingly marked out in the Scriptures that God was pleased to keep Moses out of the land, because he uttered a word wrongly, and did an action wrongly. Only a "small" point, but before God no point is small. Here was a chastisement. Oh how easy it is for us to say something or do something, and to lose the desire of our heart and the crown of our life. Again we have, on another occasion, a similar experience in the life of Moses. Moses complained of the people who were committed to his charge. They were too many, he could not look after them. Notice the Lord's answer that he should take seventy men of the elders of Israel and appoint them colleagues, but that some of the Spirit upon him should be given unto them - therefore though he may have been physically better afterwards he had lost certain spiritual power, and this was given to others instead of to himself. Here then we have brought before us, beloved friends, the way in which the Lord chastens. We have the same thought manifestly with respect to Peter. Peter is commissioned, with the rest, to go to the Gentiles. Go ye into all the WORLD, and preach the Gospel to every creature. The Gospel, as we know, is God's power unto salvation to every one that believeth, but Peter and the others remained at Jerusalem too long. Then there came that solemn church council in Acts 15; what was the outcome? The Lord more definitely marked off PAUL to go to the Gentiles. Peter's sphere, as Gal. 2 shows, is narrowed, and so, beloved friends, will it always be if we go our own way. Here then we have an illustration of Divine chastisement, and we realise that often our hindrances are a chastisement, because we have grieved the Lord. If only we walked with Him we might expect that more doors would be open. If only we walked with Him we might anticipate that more difficulties would be removed. In the Song of Solomon 5 we have brought before us the bride and she is occupied first with herself and what she feels and what she does, but then the subject changes and she is occupied with the Bridegroom. Here is a wonderful and a very precious alteration, and now she hurries forth to find the Bridegroom. It is no longer "my feet" but what His feet are; it is no longer "MY feelings" with her, but HIS feelings, and thus she journeys forth, but mark she meets trouble, she meets difficulty. She is not allowed to find Him at once. There are hindrances because her heart failed when He spoke, and oftentimes we have hindrances and difficulties, and delays, because our heart fails when He speaks at first. Beloved friends, I would that God might impress this teaching upon us, - not only have we the Lord's hindrances with respect to His marking out a plan for us, but we also have many hindrances because of our waywardness. We stand in the way of blessings, we hinder encouragements, and so we dishonour instead of adorning the Name and Gospel of our Lord. Further, the question may be asked, How can we know the will of the Lord? If there be hindrances, so that a door is closed in one place and a door closed in another place, how can we know what the Lord wants us to do? It is easy to guess, it is easy to say, I will do this, or I will do that, but how can we know the will of our God? Here we have reached one of the gravest problems in the whole of Scripture. True, if in mercy we know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we have the definite promise, "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way". We must not forget that the passage to which I referred setting forth the Lord's wonderful grace, gives a very definite description of those to whom there is this glorious unveiling. How then may we know at all times the will of the Lord? I am sure we must all acknowledge we fall short in this matter. But the following hints may be important. First, negatively, we cannot know the will of the Lord, or the opening of the Lord, merely by the impulse of the moment, or general feeling. We may not know merely by circumstances. When Jonah went down to Joppa, he found a ship going to Tarshish. In other words when he was wandering from God, he found the ship ready. Open doors do not prove we are in the right path. Yet again, we cannot argue from blessings that we are on the right path. When Moses smote the rock wrongly the water gushed out. God gave more than He promised, and in the gracious arrangements of our life, we are caused to acknowledge that the Lord blesses us even when we do not deserve it. We cannot know where the Lord is simply by blessings. Further, we cannot know the will of the Lord for us merely in isolated independence. How

then may we know when God is hindering, and when we should stand still; or how may we know when God is not hindering, and we should press toward the mark, and press forward with the confidence of faith? In general, as we have seen, Psalm 25 gives the answer, "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way". Oh what mercy is here:- "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach sinners in the way". Again in Psalm 32 after the mention of sins being FORGIVEN, we read how the Lord will graciously look after His people, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with Mine eye". Here we have a clear indication, an encouraging indication that the Lord does instruct some, that the Lord does guide them, that they can have knowledge of His perfect way and will. So in Romans 8, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". Here we have brought before us a very great privilege, and we see thereby how we may know something of the will of the Lord, how we may know something of the plan of the Lord for us, how we may know where He is hindering and where He is not hindering. God, in His own wonderful grace, has promised to His people that He will guide them in judgment. God, in His own wonderful grace has promised to His people that nothing shall happen which will hinder Him. "Who is he that will harm you if ye be imitators of Him Who is good?" The child of God is graciously held back from real harm. Difficulties may surround, obstacles may come across the path, but nothing can interfere with the Lord's purpose. How then, beloved friends, may we know the will of the Lord? Ah, we come back to the old answer, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". We must walk in the light, for in Thy light, as the Psalmist said, shall we see light. We cannot know the will of the Lord by impulses or jerks. We need to wait only upon God, that He may instruct us and direct us. We want to know when He has opened a door and when He has closed it, or when the flesh has opened it, and when the flesh has closed it. Oh that it may be ours by God's grace to make manifest the result of His gracious inworking, and to know what it is to believe the wisdom of His hindrances, and to realise the precious privilege of putting no hindrances in the way of blessing, no hindrances in the way of His work, but being able to please Him whether we be more individually affected or with others.. The precious privilege of PLEASING Him is marked out before the people of the Lord. Oh that it may be ours to enjoy this privilege to the praise of the glory of His grace.

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