

No. 123.

THE FOOLISHNESS OF BEING NATURAL.

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
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How foolish it is to be natural when God has made us supernatural, the foolishness of judging things by outward appearances in such a way that we doubt God. If we rejoice to know that He has saved us, then we have learned something of His Almightyness. Now when the Almightyness of God is brought into our daily life, then all natural reasoning becomes hopelessly incorrect, inasmuch as natural reasoning leaves out God, the One Who is All Important. Shall we take first a few Scriptures which may be used of the Holy Spirit to increase our faith in our God. Gen. 18:14, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" See Num. 11:23. Again Job 42:2, "And Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee". Jer. 32:27, "Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for Me?" In these passages we have a revelation of the Almightyness of God; I need hardly say that they have emphasized this strikingly; they are not the only passages by a long way that deal with God and His Sovereign mind. You remember that when God called Moses to be His servant, how that Moses was doubting His power to do this, and His power to do that, and the Lord said "Certainly I will be with thee". The Lord contrasted Moses's weakness with His own Almightyness. Moreover, the disciples of the Lord Jesus had been toiling all night and had caught nothing, but with one word of the Lord they enclosed a great multitude of 153 great fishes. Also Luke 1. "No Word of God is without power". We echo the words which were uttered by one who did not feel the remarkable fulness of their meaning, for Balham said "God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent; hath He said and shall not He do it, or hath He spoken and shall not He make it good?" Now it is blessed if we are among those who have rested upon the Lord Jesus

to enjoy the fulness of teaching wrapped up in such striking expressions. First of all, we are to consider generally God's hand in history, to see that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. Look to what God did in the matter of renovating this earth, when Satan's sin had brought darkness. Look to what God did when He brought up the Israelites out from the power of Pharaoh within that sphere of bondage; was there anything too hard for the Lord? Pharaoh determined that they should not go, but God brought Israel with a high hand and stretched out arm, though Pharaoh was behind them with forces pursuing them, that he might retake them, which would have meant death to a large number of them. Was there anything too hard for the Lord? The cloudy pillar came in between them and the army of Pharaoh, on one side light, on the other side darkness. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? In front of them there was the sea to shut them in, but it was not only divided, the way became absolutely dry, and instead of it being a wall to be against them, it was for them. Is anything too hard for the Lord? For forty years were they in that great and terrible wilderness, and though they wandered, God did not withhold His manna, because ~~HE~~ He, though the God of righteousness, is also the God Who is rich in mercy, and His infinite supplies were sufficient to meet the needs, whether of one or two, or of two million, numbers are nothing to Him. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Before them the foes of Canaan were laid low, though seven nations were ~~not~~ mightier than themselves. Is anything too hard for the Lord? He could sweep down their enemies before them, He could assert Himself and exalt the nation of Israel, and cause the surrounding nations to know that the captains of the Lord's hosts were in the midst of the Lord's people. God was there, He was in the midst of Israel. Is anything too hard for the Lord? We go on with the history and we see throughout the Scriptures the record of God's miracles worked out sometimes for a nation, sometimes for a few, sometimes individual, but miracle after miracle until the life of our beloved Lord. The powers of disease and demons could not stand before Him, He had

might to deal with all. Was anything too hard for the Lord? He spoke and it was done. He touched and life came, and so we look back on history recorded in Scripture. We can come further and see what has taken place since our beloved Lord left this earth. How wonderful have been the miracles of the last nineteen hundred years. The time has been as it were lengthened as Israel's time in the wilderness because of sin, but He, Who supplied the manna, knows best, and has met the supplies of His people during the last nineteen hundred years, and that which has been expected has come true, for history is again and again the evidence that there is no blind force, that there is no mere chance, that there is no natural human scheme which can accomplish all its purposes, for behind all there is the mighty God, that men may be brought to acknowledge the hand of God in history, and to say with Nebuchadnezzar, Now none can stay that Hand or say unto Him, "What doest Thou"? The words of Daniel in this connection are very striking. Again and again in that book we have brought before us God stepping in with respect to history, and one finds it so in the future history that will break over this world. God will assert Himself. Is anything too hard for the Lord? But may we not, beloved friends, come to that which appears to us, more definitely and more forcibly as individuals, in salvation? There is ~~nothing~~ nothing too hard for the Lord. Salvation is a miracle before which other miracles seem as nothing. We speak sometimes of the absence of miracles now; we see not a blind man with eyes opened, we see not a lame man walk, we see not the dead rise to life, - but greater miracles than these are being accomplished from day to day, for when a poor lost sinner is laid hold of, and brought to feel his state of antagonism and iniquity, then he desires the fulness of the Lord of glory. Does not every saved sinner make manifest before men and before demons, that our God is a God of miracles? Beloved friends, think what salvation is, it is not simply a development, it is not a temporary change, it is not an adoption of religion, but, dear friends, the whole of salvation is something vastly different. If any-

one is in Christ there is a NEW CREATION. The dead have heard the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard have been brought to a newness of life. Salvation is not merely a theory, it is not merely a doctrine, but it is a fact, a Divine fact, a glorious fact, and well may we praise God for every one who has experienced it. Is there anything TOO hard for the Lord? A sinner is set against Him, as Saul of Tarsus when hurrying north to Damascus! He has set purposes. Entering into houses he will slay men and women and cast them into prison, but on that road to Damascus there comes, in the blaze of noonday light, a more blazing light, the Lord of glory appears and manifests Himself. It is to Saul of Tarsus that the Lord of glory has come. There is a miracle to be accomplished, Saul the persecutor is to be changed into Paul, the bondservant of Jesus Christ. If any man could have resisted, truly it was Saul of Tarsus, he was a man of skill, a man advanced in knowledge beyond many of his class, since being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers. Judaism was against ~~the~~ Christ, and Saul of Tarsus was a master of Judaism; but Saul of Tarsus is laid low and brought not only to be laid low, but brought to be lifted up, lifted up to the Lord of Glory. Beloved friends, here we see that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. We sometimes wonder when God in His grace will save Jewish Rabbis, it seems almost hopeless, but - is there anything too hard for the Lord? Salvation is never a chance, never a natural event; some look to us more likely than others, but the Almighty God can work where He pleases, and therefore we cannot despair, we cannot look at things from a human standpoint, and say this one will not be saved, nor can we take the other side of the question and say we are sure this one WILL be saved because there is the interest outwardly in the Truth. We must quietly and solemnly realize that salvation is a work of sovereign grace but is anything too hard for the Lord? Here we have the encouragement of our promise, the promise of faith that God may work His miracles, that there may be the completion of that company in Christ Jesus. I dare say, at times, those who are

gathered this evening, and have known the Lord as their Saviour, it may be for years, I dare say at times they have almost a thought of despair concerning those for whom they have prayed and prayed and prayed; efforts seem vain, and prayers seem not to bring any result, but is anything too hard for the Lord? Thus there is encouragement further unto prayer and to confidence in prayer that the Mighty God may lay hold of some and fulfil His purpose of covenant love. May we not go a step further in connection with the Lord's work in this building and in the open air, in connection with the Lord's work as to the boys and girls who are connected with these meetings? Is ANYTHING too hard for the Lord? May we not take another aspect. We can call to mind perhaps, the state of one concerned and troubled about salvation, but there seems the feeling it is too good to be true. Is anything too hard for the Lord? He begins and carries through a work, and salvation meets the case of the needy. Again, since we have been brought to rest upon the precious Lord Jesus as our Saviour, have we not proved in our daily experience that there is nothing too hard for the Lord? It is true that much of our life is ordinary, in one sense rightly so, for God does not want His people to be made up of extraordinary events, but in another sense it is a grave mistake if our life is ordinary. We should be those, who, on the pathway of obedience and enjoying the gracious working of the Spirit of God, are expecting miracles from Him Who never fails. We look back in our experience to when we were brought, as it were, to a dead stop, and the Lord opened the door, and through trials led to blessings, and through difficulties only manifested Himself the more. We look back and see some striking answer to prayer, we look back and see some wonderful way in which God interposed when we were afraid to trust Him beyond the ordinary length of faith, I mean the length of OUR faith - to trust Him and risk something more. It is true we may not have seen that wondrous blessing which Abraham saw. He was brought to be willing to offer up his son, and in another moment his son would have been dead. But he had received a Divine command and there-

fore all natural reasoning and natural feelings must be laid low. It was then that God said unto Abraham that there would be additional blessings for him, it was then that he experienced the privilege of being the friend of God, because he was willing to obey to the last moment, and to prove that there was nothing too hard for the Lord Who can time everything. An arm can be stopped, a ram can be caught in a thicket, neither a minute too early nor a minute too late. We may not have trusted God to this extent, but if only we had faith as a grain of mustard seed, we should experience more and more that our God is a God of miracles. What we have seen in our experience, coupled with what we have seen in the Scripture should spur us on to trust God at all costs beyond appearances, to trust God beyond possibilities, to trust God beyond probabilities. May we not go a step further? If in our past experience we have heard the question sound forth, "I am the Lord the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for ME", if we have known that in the past, in measure, how about the present and future? Let me suggest a general future. First God has said that His beloved Son shall return and set up His kingdom at Jerusalem, does it look likely? Men say all things continue as they were, - does it look likely? We are to believe God. We need faith to act as those who have believed God, and to live looking for that blessed Hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Everything that has been prophesied in Scripture is as true as if it had already taken place. The plagues of Revelation are no more myths than the plagues of Exodus. Our God SHALL come and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before Him and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. Beloved friends, we need to believe all that God has said about the future of His people. The worst commentary on the Scriptures is the faithless lives of those who PROFESS to believe them. If only we made manifest that we were not of this world, though the world might consider us foolish, it could not say that we went against the Scriptures, but now the world looks on and laughs because many who bear the name of the Lord are

not illustrating their faith, - the faith they profess in the Lord, and the testimony of the Lord. Do not misunderstand me, a large number who bear the name of the Lord are not the Lord's people at all. We want this to come home to our own hearts that we may live in the light of what will happen in the future, for is not our beloved Lord a reality to us, a reality which influences our lives? How can we account that children of God are not more earnest, how can we account that children of God are not laying aside every weight and the sin which is so ~~xxxx~~ easily besetting and running the race with patience? why is there not more godly zeal? why do we not have more of putting the Lord first, and seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness? Do we believe what He has said? Then we need in the power of the Holy Spirit to act up to it, and to give our power to it. A remarkable passage which we are considering comes forward again. A saved one can live a life of trust amid a surrounding world. It is hard to go against the tide, always it is wearying to resist, striving against sin. Yes, but is anything too hard for the Lord? Through God we shall do valiantly, without God, we might well fail. The Scriptural life without God is impossible. Not only are there hidden in the Scriptures the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, but there is hidden in ~~the Scriptures the treasures of wisdom and knowledge~~ HIM all the fulness of the Godhead. And so we come back again to the future; what God will accomplish. Dear friends, if God can do everything it is for us to ~~to~~ live like this, that poor lost sinners may see that we believe God. One looks back to Paul's history on the shipwreck. There was nothing to cause confidence in surroundings, but he said to the people "I believe God", and acted upon faith. Let us expect miracles, let us expect extraordinary things, I do not mean a parade of miracles that men would call miracles, but let us expect that God will so arrange our lives that what seems impossible, out of love to Him will be possible when we can spend and be spent and do much more^e than we have done, and be much more devoted than we have been, because with God there is might. We are so apt to fail to possess our possessions, we do not enjoy that which we have in Christ to the extent to which we might, but

let us now seek from God a further enjoyment of this preciousness, that our life may be manifestly in Christ. And just as the gift of Christ is so beautifully free to those who are brought low enough to accept Him, so the enabling power of God is beautifully free, if, in wondrous mercy we are kept low enough to receive it. "My grace is sufficient for thee" sounded out the words of old, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness".
