

SO GREAT SALVATION

Selected Sermons of
Rev DB Macleod



Ettrick Press
2025

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Publishers' Note

The sermons which make up this volume were preached by Rev DB Macleod (1929–1995) during his time as pastor of Gilmore Place Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Although this is now 30 years ago, Mr Macleod continues to be remembered with great affection and admiration throughout the church and beyond. The two things which people still mention about him are his gentle godliness and his palpably earnest preaching.

By way of introduction, a biographical account of Mr Macleod appears prior to the sermons, along with a tribute to his wife, Mrs Una Macleod.

The sermons selected for publication in this volume are arranged in three parts, as follows.

Part 1 contains the majority of the sermons. These have been transcribed from audio recordings and are arranged here in chronological order. They were preached at various times during Mr Macleod's Edinburgh pastorate, although mainly in the first half of his time there.

Part 2 contains a small number of sermons which are taken from hearers' handwritten notes. They date from the second half of Mr Macleod's time in Edinburgh, for which audio recordings were generally not available at the time when this book was being prepared.

Part 3 contains sermons preached at various communion seasons. They are arranged here in the order of the 'days' of the

communion season, although they were preached in different congregations on different occasions.

Mr Macleod's preaching is consistently marked by reverence and the ardent desire for sinners to be saved. His recurring themes are the desperate plight of sinners in their abject sinfulness and the richness of God's provision of redemption in Christ Jesus. The danger of souls being lost for all eternity was very real to him and he laboured to point his hearers to the glorious Saviour who died on Calvary and is now exalted at God's right hand to grant forgiveness of sins. 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Amidst all the solemnity of his warnings, however, he is never harsh and never hard-hearted. The opposite of berating his hearers, his method is to draw us by the hand and run together to embrace the welcoming Saviour.

The publishers acknowledge with gratitude the generous provision by Mrs Morag Hymers of a large number of cassettes then in her possession. We also thank Mr Iain MacLeod for supplementing these with further recordings, and Drs Louie and MJ van de Lagemaat for their expert assistance with transcription. The work of editing these transcriptions was made much easier thanks to the most valuable help of Mrs Elizabeth Campbell, Mrs Fiona Campbell and Dr MJ van de Lagemaat. We are deeply grateful to Mrs Cathie and Mr Neil Murray for sharing their notebooks of handwritten notes they took down as hearers. We also express our sincere appreciation to Rev John MacLeod, a close friend of both Rev DB and Mrs Una Macleod, for contributing the biographical introduction. Finally, we are indebted to Rev DB and Una Macleod's daughters for the warmth of their support towards this project as well as for their and the extended family's generosity in providing photographs and additional material about their parents and their lives.

~ 1 ~

What to Glory in

Lord's Day morning, 29 September 1991

Jeremiah 9:23–24

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: ²⁴ but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah is often spoken of as the weeping prophet. He wept, not only because the message which he had to deliver to this people was a solemn one, but also because of the hardness of their heart. Their ears were closed from hearing the message which he had to deliver to them in the name of the Lord. So we find Jeremiah bringing before this people in this chapter, as well as in other chapters of this prophecy, the solemn judgments that were to come upon them. He warned them that judgments were shortly to

overtake them because of their sin, and because of the hardness of their heart.

As this was true concerning the children of Israel in Jeremiah's day, how true it is concerning us in our own day! The Word of God sets before us the solemn threatenings that belong to us as a people who have backslidden from our God. What was threatened of old is still threatened against the nation, once highly favoured, which has turned away from the Word of God and from the way that is right, to walk in ways that are not good. God threatens such nations with his judgment and with his sore displeasure.

I. The condition of the people

In considering the words that are before us, we may notice, first of all, the state and condition of the people to whom the prophet was addressing these words.

That their condition was a backslidden one is very evident even from what the prophet utters at the beginning of this chapter, and also in the closing verses of the preceding chapter. 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?' Evidently they were in a backsliding state, when the provision was made — balm in Gilead, and a physician there — and yet they had no healing. They had not sought to the God who is able to heal even a backsliding nation, in his mercy and in his love.

Because of their obstinacy of heart, we find Jeremiah lamenting and mourning over them, saying in verse 1, 'Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!' He would fain weep for them who would not weep for themselves, who would not weep over their sins and their backsliding from their

God. He desired to go away from them, desiring in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, for he sees that they were all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. They were a backsliding people, people given to backsliding from their God.

They had no love for the truth. He had to say, 'They bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth.' They had no love for the Word of God, for the truth of God, for the revelation that he had given of himself. They were 'proceeding from evil to evil.' The Lord had to say, 'They know not me.' They were given to deceit. They would deceive every one his neighbour, and would not speak the truth. They taught their tongue to speak lies, and they wearied themselves to commit iniquity. It is such a people that Jeremiah addressed here, a people in a very sad state and condition.

The Lord had to say to them that they had forsaken his law, which he had set before them, that they did not obey his voice nor walk in his statutes, but that they walked after the imagination of their own heart.

They were idolaters. Such was their low condition. They went after Balaam, which their fathers taught them. People who had once known their God, had now forsaken the God of Jacob and turned away from him.

If that was true concerning Israel in the days of Jeremiah, is it not true concerning us as a people and as a nation, that we have backslidden from our God, that God who is known in our midst as the God of salvation? The God whom we have forsaken is the one who made himself known in his Word, in his ordinances, in the assemblies of his people, in the wonders that he wrought in times of old, in gathering out a people for himself, to be a people to his glory. How highly among the nations of the earth was our own nation raised, when the Lord was feared, when God was honoured

in the assembly of his saints, when men worshipped the living and true God!

But it is otherwise with us now, for we have forsaken the God of salvation, the living and true God. We have returned, as a nation, to idols, for greater praise is given in our land to the religion of the East than to the living and true God, the great God of eternity, the God who is 'a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.' We have forsaken our God.

What a solemn case it is for a people to be in, to have turned their back to God and not the face! What heathen nations were not ready to do — to forsake their god — Israel had done when they forsook the God of Israel, and we have done as a people through forsaking the Lord our God.

We have to consider our own part in it, our backslidings of heart from our God. How far we have departed in the spirit of our mind from the Lord, the God of Israel, the God of Jacob! How far we are removed from the living and lively exercise of soul going out after God, the living God, because of the backsliding of our heart, and because of giving a place in our heart to that which is sinful and evil, when the Lord calls upon us to forsake the evil and choose the good!

The Lord had had to contend with his people long before this time. In Isaiah's day, he had to send similar messages to this people, bringing before them their awful backsliding. They had forsaken him, and he had to say, 'Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they have gone away backward' (Isaiah 1:4). He could find nothing in them, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

That is what the Lord has to say still to a backsliding people, and to us individually, in the backslidings of our heart and the

backslidings of our life from our God. He is addressing us in his own Word, setting before us the solemnity of forsaking him who is the fountain of living water, and hewing out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

So we are to apply these words to ourselves, and not to think that they apply only to a people who lived many hundreds of years ago, in ages past. The Word of God is ever new. It is speaking today, if we have ears to hear what the Lord has to say to us.

What did the Lord say to this people who had backslidden from him? He warned them of judgments to come. Jeremiah had to speak these words to them, 'Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?' He had to testify to what was yet to come upon them. 'Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the heathen.' The Lord was saying to them, 'Consider ye, and call for the mourning women.' It was time for them to repent, to turn from the evil of their way. The women were told, 'Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth. Teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation,' because of the judgments that were about to overtake this backsliding people. 'For death was come into their windows, and entered into their palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.'

What dreadful calamities the Word of the Lord was setting before them here! 'The carcases of men shall fall as dung in the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, when none shall gather them.' Judgment was to come, judgment was threatened, for their sins, for their backsliding — the judgments of the Most High, the judgments which the Lord brings upon a guilty people.

They might think that they would escape his judgments because they were his people, but it was not to be so. 'Behold,' the prophet says, 'the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised, not only the heathen nations of Egypt and Edom and Ammon and Moab, but Judah as well!' This backsliding people were to receive the punishment of their iniquities. All those other nations were uncircumcised. They were heathen nations. But 'all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.' Though Israel had the outward sign of the covenant, yet inwardly they were far off from God. They gloried in their outward privileges, and thought that that would be sufficient — they could live as they pleased. The Lord was teaching them through his servant Jeremiah what he taught afterwards through his servant Paul, when he declared, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God' (Romans 2:28–29). They were separated from their God in the spirit of their mind. Their hearts were alienated from their God. The Lord does not merely look on the outward part. God looks on the heart. He knows what the state of the heart is — what the state of the heart of each individual is, and what the state of the heart of the nation is.

So we have here a people backslidden from their God, ripening for judgment, and judgment was ready to overtake them. They are a people called to weeping, called to repentance, that they would turn from their evil way and live. That was the message of the Lord to his people, until judgment eventually overtook them. 'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' That is the mind of God still, for backsliding people. To us, each one, because of the backslidings of our heart, he is still saying, 'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'

2. What they are warned not to glory in

Let us go on to notice the warning that was given here, when the Lord was speaking through Jeremiah, directing the people as to that in which they were *not* to glory. ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches.’

This is the spirit that is in fallen man. This is the spirit that is in the soul backsliding from his God — glorying in his wisdom, glorying in his might, glorying in his riches.

Here were those who were wise after the wisdom of this world. Some, in their wisdom, would say, ‘What of the threatenings of judgment? What of calamities to come?’ Here was security for them — they could trust in their own wisdom! They could rely on their natural understanding to escape any calamities that might overtake them. For the wise of this world think that their wisdom will preserve them, that the knowledge they possess will be a sure protection to them from the dangers that may beset them from the right hand or from the left. They will be able to make plans by which they shall escape from the threatened judgment.

Others, in their wisdom, and relying on their wisdom, may be ready to say, ‘These judgments shall never come! These things shall never overtake us! We have such an understanding of the times that we know full well that what is threatened shall never come to pass!’ No doubt there were many such of the wise of Jeremiah’s day who were concluding that this word of the Lord would never be fulfilled. This judgment would never overtake them, or would not come in their day, and that they would escape.

But the Lord has a message for the wise. ‘Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.’ This is no confidence in which to trust. The wisdom of man is foolishness with God. There is no way of escape when the judgments of God come. They are

like a sweeping rain coming on all the children of men, wherever they are directed by the hand of God, and none can escape when it is time for judgment.

If we think of our own day, how many there are of the wise of this world who think that they can establish peace on the earth. They can reconcile nations. They can bring the peace which has eluded the world so long. Now, by their wisdom, it will be brought about! Yet these same wise men are ignorant of God. The wise of the world in our day despise God to such an extent that they scarcely mention the name of God. That is true in a lamentable degree in our own land. How seldom is the name of God on the lips of the leaders of the nations, except it be in the way of taking his name in vain! The wise of this world propose to settle the affairs of the nations, yet they know not God, the living and true God.

The Lord will make very plain the emptiness of the wisdom of men. For that wisdom is folly. Therefore let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been carried away captive. Now the time was come, and the backsliding people of Judah, the southern kingdom, would be carried away captive as well. The case of Judah was altogether more solemn than that of Israel, because they did not turn when they saw what had overtaken the northern kingdom. 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.'

'Neither let the mighty man glory in his might.' This is another refuge of men — the might and power of their own arm, or the might and strength of the armies of the nation. What powerful forces men may raise up! They put their trust in these, in order that they might escape many calamities.

Yet how vain are the forces of this world! How vain is the strength and might of man when the judgments of God come! Who can hope for deliverance from the wrath of Jehovah? What will the sword do then? What will all the power of nuclear arms do when

the wrath of God is poured out on the nations for their sins? What will all the power and might of nations do when the judgments of God come?

Let not the mighty man glory in his might, or the strength and power of the individual or of the nation. It is altogether vain, when God is to deal with men. Let not the mighty man think that he shall escape. God will execute judgment and righteousness, and with a sweeping judgment he will come on backsliding nations, backsliding people, and backsliding sinners. Whatever strength men may have to resist the power of man's hand, they have no power against the arm of Jehovah. When the Lord begins to deal with a backsliding nation and people, or with an individual, who can stand before the power of the Lord?

'Neither let the rich man glory in his riches.' Riches appear to be what will afford succour in every time of difficulty, and every time of need. Surely if any are to escape, then it is those who are rich with the riches of this world. Shall not these riches be of protection to them? Can they not trust in these riches?

But riches take them wings and fly away. Riches also are vain when the day of judgment comes, when the day of calamity comes. That was true in days past, and it is true still. It was true when the *Titanic* sank in the Atlantic Ocean. On that ship were many of the rich of this world. What did their riches avail them, when the ship struck the iceberg and there were not sufficient boats to allow them all to escape? A watery grave awaited multitudes of them. Their riches were of no avail.

So it is still. The rich man need not glory in his riches. How little protection riches can afford in the day of calamity, in the day of the Lord's fierce anger! How quickly they can disappear has been

manifest so recently in our land.¹⁸ Let not the rich man glory in his riches. There is no safety, there is no security there for a backsliding people, for sinners in a backsliding course. Let not the soul trust in these things.

3. What they are to glory in

Let us notice, then, thirdly, what the soul is to glory in. 'Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.' What we are to glory in is that the God of heaven is the God he is.

Here is a place of safety from the overflowing judgment and wrath of God. That is, in the knowledge of the living and true God, and finding a hiding place in Jesus Christ.

The soul is directed to the knowledge of that God who is the omniscient one, the all-knowing, all-wise God. Let us cast our own wisdom aside. If we are to glory in wisdom, then let us glory in the all-wise one, the God of eternity. If we are to glory in might, let us glory in the omnipotent Jehovah, whose might is infinite. Let the

¹⁸ This may be a reference to the BCCI scandal. The BCCI was one of the world's largest private banks. It collapsed suddenly in July 1991, after the exposure of fraud and money laundering on a vast scale. Investors worldwide lost their money. The bank's 120,000 UK customers included thousands of individuals who lost their life savings overnight, as well as many local authorities, who lost millions. More generally, this was the time of the early 1990s recession, when the UK experienced an economic downturn after the boom of the late 1980s.

soul trust in this one. Let the nation come to know this one, whose power is infinite, who is able to bring down mighty power, who is able to give protection from all danger and from all harm to all those who have fled to him for refuge, for he is the shelter from the storm, a refuge to those who flee to him, a hiding place from the tempest. If we are to glory in riches, let us glory in the riches of the one in whom there is an infinite fullness of goodness and of mercy.

This is the one who is making himself known in this world. Do we know him? Have we come to know anything of the glory of the infinitely glorious one? Have we come to know anything of his wisdom, of his might, of the riches in his possession? Such is the God with whom we have to do. The great God of eternity is revealing himself in his own Word, making himself known in the Son of his love.

‘I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.’ He exercises loving kindness, or mercy, in the earth. He is a God of mercy, yet ‘a God without iniquity; just and right is he,’ a God of justice and righteousness. This is the God with whom we have to do, a God who shall not do evil. ‘Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?’ He is the God of truth. He loves righteousness. He hates iniquity. ‘In these things I delight, saith the Lord.’ Such is the revelation that he is giving of himself in his Word.

The great question for this people was, did they know him? And if they knew him, then, was this their exercise, glorying in him? ‘Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.’ To know the God of eternity, and to know him as the God of salvation, and as the God of our salvation — that is what we need as individuals, and that is what we need as a people, as a nation. That is what Judah needed at this time — to know their God. For they that know their God shall do exploits.

‘I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth.’ He is the God of infinite holiness. He will not pass over sin. He is the God of judgment, who will punish iniquity. Therefore if we are to know him, we must know him as our God in Jesus Christ, for it is in the atonement that was made on Calvary that his anger was turned away. That is the only security for us. The only hiding place for us is in Jesus Christ. Why is there a hiding place for us in the rock which is Jesus Christ? Because the wrath of Jehovah came upon that rock, the rock of ages, in the great work of redemption. The anger of God was quenched in the infinite satisfaction that Christ gave on Calvary’s accursed tree. There is a hiding place for sinners in this world, in the mercy and kindness and love of God. Therefore we are called to know him. ‘Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord ...’

What knowledge have we of the living and true God? Have we any spiritual, saving knowledge of God? If so, it must be in and through his beloved Son. For we cannot know God apart from the revelation that he is giving of himself in Jesus Christ. What a glorious revelation that is! For in the revelation that is given of God in Jesus Christ, we are brought face to face with a God of infinite holiness, a God of truth, a God of right, a God who will not do evil, yet a God who must punish sin, who must bring his judgments on evildoers, and on a backsliding nation, and on sinners in their backsliding. The Lord does this because he is the righteous one, the infinitely holy one. ‘I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth.’ It is in these things that the Lord delights.

Oh, how many hard things poor sinners write against God! That is true particularly of sinners in a backsliding state. That is true of nations in a backsliding state. How many hard things they say against God! Yet the God who is bringing his judgments on a

backsliding people is the one who declares himself to be the Lord which exercises loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. He declares that he delights in these things. Judgment is his strange work. He delights in mercy. 'As I live,' saith the Lord, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But let the wicked turn from his evil way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'

This is the message to Judah in Jeremiah's day. This is the message of the Lord to us in our own day, in our backsliding, backslidden condition, to us as a people and to us as individuals, in our many backslidings of heart from our God. 'Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercises loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.'

May the Lord add his blessing. Let us pray.

O Lord, do thou bless to us the revelation thou art giving of thyself in thy Word. Thou art angry with the wicked every day; thou art waiting to be gracious. Oh, do thou in mercy look upon us, each one. Bring us, each one, into a living relationship to thyself through Jesus Christ, that our sins, which are many, might be blotted out, and that we would be accepted in the Beloved, and made heirs of thy glorious kingdom, which thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Hasten better days to Zion. Turn us, as a nation and as a people, from the Queen on the throne to the lowest in the land. Give spiritual wisdom as well as natural wisdom to those that rule in the high places of our land, that they might rule the nation in thy fear, that their desire would be that thy name would be glorified in the earth, and that thy kingdom would come. Hasten better days to Zion, the days that thou hast promised, when Zion by the mighty Lord built up again shall be. Watch over us, each one. Be with us on this thy holy day.

SO GREAT SALVATION

*Come out with us at the evening hour. Be thou the glory in our midst.
Take away all our sins. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*