

SERMON preached by MR. F. L. GOSDEN
 at "GALEED" Chapel, BRIGHTON, on
 FRIDAY, 7th OCTOBER, 1960, on the
 occasion of a Baptizing Service.

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Text: I Corinthians 15, vs. 3 & 4.

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The tremendous things of the eternal God become increasingly solemn as we get nearer to the grave. And the Apostle here shows what was the subject matter of his preaching - "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand." So that there is that important point at the threshold of this beautiful chapter. It is a reception of the truth and the gospel coming "not in word only but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." And it is a very important consideration. He speaks of the Church at Corinth having received this gospel which he preached, received it by faith, and he saw that truth, that gospel, that doctrine in which their faith stood. And I would for a moment look at this reception.

It is the only proper authority in the ministry. If a man doesn't deliver what he has received, he has no business in the pulpit. It is a very solemn consideration to me, and you will see the connection by this reception also of the truth by the people. Writing to the Thessalonians he speaks also of the same thing - "For this cause also" - and, my friends, we are thankful to be able to say the same - "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Now that shows the importance of a reception by faith of the gospel under the appointed means of preaching.

And that this is important is shown again by his appeal to the Colossians: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" - as ye have received Him. And again John,

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showing the difference between those to whom the Lord came says, "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not, but to as many as received Him, to them gave He power (or right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name." And so he sets receiving and believing as the same thing.

"I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved." That is by the gospel. The gospel contains all that accompanies salvation, the Lord Jesus Himself being the source, the sum of the gospel. It is the gospel of our salvation. It is complete - there is nothing wanting, nothing lacking. It reaches to the whole of a sinner throughout - "For as sin has reigned unto death, even so" - as completely, throughout the whole being, through every fibre - "even so shall grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory (or as the margin is, "If ye hold fast") what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." The Apostle did not overlook this. There is a believing in vain. It is a believing by a false faith, a notional faith. And notions may be correct, and you may believe what your notions dictate to your natural mind, but it is a believing in vain. There will be no profit in it, no salvation in it, no union to Christ in it.

And then he comes more immediately to the text. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." And it comes to our mind that he approaches the sacred Lord's Supper in the same way. He says there that he received that which he was about to deliver, those emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the dear Redeemer - he received it. It may be a point which is very penetrating to us, and we need it to be a searching word, a reception of the truth by faith. And if we are enabled presently, we will try and show the effect of this reception of the truth, by being planted in the likeness of Christ's death and in the likeness also of

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resurrection, showing a blessed vital union between Christ in such a way that all that He is, and has, and has accomplished, and has laid up, is ours.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received."

And he shows here that the two main pillars of the gospel are the doctrines or the blessed facts of Christ's death and resurrection, and the strength of these two pillars is the Person of God's eternal Son incarnate, from Whom all virtue, and life, and benefit in the gospel derive. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received."

The husbandman must be first partaker of the fruit, and there is this commission to the ministers of the gospel - "Go through, go through the gates." A man must go through the gates before he can lead others, and he must receive the truth in faith by the Spirit before he can deliver it. And there is something very sacred in delivering the truth of the gospel under a sense of an experience of its power in the heart. Not always so - often we may have to labour in darkness and bondage, and so you may hear in a spirit of bondage and darkness, but that doesn't take away that which you have received. That remains - "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you."

"How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." So we have just the whole of the gospel summarised in His Person, death and resurrection. And this was according to the Scriptures. It shows the importance of the Word of God, and also the connection of the Word of God with believing and receiving. You doubtless are acquainted with the 10th Romans - "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart (that is the reception of Him) that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And then he

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comes to how this gospel is received and the effect of it. "How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things'." So you see that blessed connection that God has made between the preaching of the gospel, the Word of God and believing, so that it does make the services of great importance. And you will see also the close connection there is between the mouth and the heart - "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Now to my mind this is what the Apostle has in mind here when he presses the importance of a reception of the preached word, and the effect of that gospel in its power in the heart and in the life of a believer.

But now we have before us the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The one purpose and object of it was for our sins. "He His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree." And therefore He died unto sin once, and if we have union with Him, for the vital thing is union to the Lord Jesus and that by the regenerating grace of the Spirit. Oh, my friends, there is a beginning. There will be no reception of the truth until one is born again of the Spirit and put into possession of eternal life, and at that same moment experimentally a sinner has union with the Lord Jesus Christ. I say experimentally, because in the covenant of grace His people were in union with Him as given to Him by the Father. But experimentally, that union is wrought at the same instant that they are born again. And from that great initial work in experience of the Holy Ghost proceeds all that life of faith which receives from the fulness of Christ every grace, and every favour, and all that pertains unto life and godliness. So that it is a great thing to receive Christ Jesus,

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the Lord. And I like to use, and we have a warrant to use that Scripture to show that to receive Him, to believe in Him, and to come to Him are all the same thing. And for some of you who feel to be troubled in your minds, just look into your hearts with respect to these three things and see whether you would receive Him if He would but come, and whether you ever come to Him as a poor sinner seeking His mercy, and whether you believe in Him. You may not believe that He is yours, but do you believe in Him, that He is the Son of God? Oh, it is a great thing to believe in Christ! You may believe in Him under a sense of your need of Him. To have a need of Christ is no small mercy. True, you cannot live upon need, you cannot live upon your destitution, but it is a mercy to be destitute without Christ, to be unsatisfied until you possess Him, Now in these things there is a very blessed element of reception and believing, and to those of you who have attained thus far, I would say, go on in that way. "Thou shalt obtain the blessing yet."

So that the whole glory and strength of the gospel rests, is vested in and derived from the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for our sins. And this was necessary. Although His death was voluntary, it was necessary as He was under the law. The law demanded it. Necessary, too, as He was the Testator of the covenant of the new testament, the will of God. Really, the new testament is the will of God, the benefits of the covenant of grace. But there were conditions to be completed before the benefits of that covenant could be disposed. There was the covenant of grace before the foundation of the world, and man fell in Adam. If Christ had not condescended to come, if the love of His divine Father was not such as it was to send Him, if it were not for His work and His obedience to the law, the covenant of grace would not be valid. But He satisfied the law in His holy, sinless, suffering life, and He sealed the covenant with His precious blood. And this seal of the covenant with the blood

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of Christ is wonderful love. Oh, look at what is bequeathed unto you, unworthy sinner, as revealed in the new testament of which the Lord says at the last Supper, "This is the new testament in My blood which was shed for you." And this blood sealed the covenant, that all conditions were complete, that He had satisfied the law, that He had magnified it, made it honourable, that He had vindicated divine justice and the holiness and glory of God, that "righteousness and peace had met together and truth and peace had kissed each other." When those divine attributes of God which were a consuming fire to the wicked are united in the Person of Christ and are there for their salvation. And He sealed the covenant with His precious blood. And where there is a testament there must of necessity be the death of the testator, and that brings the blessings of the covenant of grace and of the new testament into activity, and the Holy Ghost dispenses those blessings, and those blessings are dispensed through the preaching of the gospel by the Holy Spirit.

Now this is one effect of the precious death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died when He bowed His head under a sense of victory, not defeat. The Lord Jesus did not die in the dark or under the wrath of God. No; the law had cursed Him and He knew in Himself when all was accomplished and bowed His head and in a voice of triumph He cried, "It is finished". What a great salvation it is, and how it does make this reception of it to be very blessed. And are there not some hearts here that are opened to receive it? Do not you feel there is that in your heart, that peculiar something which you would not confess is faith but which is faith, that goes out to this truth in longing, "Oh, that He would come to Me? Oh, that the Holy Ghost would bring into my heart the blessed power, and mercy, and pardoning love that flowed from the wounded side at Calvary!"

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"He died for our sins." He is exalted now, a great High Priest, but His Priesthood was in the offering of Himself without spot unto God when He died. He offered Himself without spot. Now you keep hold of that word "received". Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which ye also have received and wherein you stand." So precious it is, so vital, such a power that will overcome unbelief, the world, the flesh and the devil; it gives a soul hope of eternal glory. "Now that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures", so that there is another necessity in His death, of course, in the fulfilment of the Word of God, and His Word must be fulfilled. And this gospel concerning the death of Christ was first preached in the 3rd Genesis, 15th verse, a promise that this Seed, Christ, should bruise the serpent's head, and upon that ground the Apostle says for the encouragement of sin-wounded sinners, "He shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." I wish I could preach this gospel. I love it, and in my little measure I believe I have received what I deliver, and it is sweet in the reception of it to feel that the kingdom of God is within you.

"How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried." There is no place into which His people must come but what the Forerunner has gone first. Oh, what a comfort it has been made to many a dying saint! "He was buried." True, He saw no corruption. We shall see corruption. What then is the encouragement? Where is the benefit or evidence of union with Christ who saw no corruption, but we shall see corruption? Why this, "Who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." And that would not be so except for the virtue of His precious death by which He put away sin, and therefore is the death of deaths, and it brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." So there is this before the saints that "mortality shall be

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swallowed up of life." Oh, what an everlasting gospel this is! What a mighty eternal kingdom! "And we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved", and there may be some poor sinner here who feels to need just that - you move, circumstances move you, the world moves, kings and kingdoms rise and fall, changing scenes of life, but the things we are occupied with are immovable, the Church of God is impregnable, and all this was secured by the death of the Lord Jesus.

I have considered that the greatest text in the Bible referring to the effect of the death of the Lord Jesus is contained in this Epistle, "He hath made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin", at all, no guile was found in His lips, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, was made sin that "sinners might be made the righteousness of God in Him".

"That Christ died for our sins." That He came right to the very thing itself and took it away by the sacrifice of Himself. And all the curse due to sinners He bore. All the punishment of sin that His people deserved was upon Him. He was deserted of His divine Father as completely for the time as His people should experience in hell. It was a real solemn desertion and the bitterest part of His sacred sufferings, the dear Lamb of God. "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." See Him weltering in the Garden of Gethsemane in agony and in blood. Do you love Him, sinner? "The love of Christ constraineth us." Have you received the truth of it? Do you need Him?

"How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that He was buried and that He rose again, the third day." The real cause of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was that He had satisfied divine justice in the law so that whereas the justice of the law was in the condemnation of sin, the Lord Jesus having condemned sin in His own flesh, now with respect to the dear Redeemer in the tomb, the justice of the law was in His resurrection. So it is a just salvation. He is a just God and a Saviour. He does not forfeit anything of His justice. This is the glory of Christ in His death and resurrection. /And....

And not only so, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ declared Him to be what He said He was, and also declared the meaning for which He came. "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" did it, and when He had finished the work and was buried, then He must rise. The grave could not hold Him. But see the blessedness of union with Him. It is a mystery - "Unto you is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." And upon this point I would just say this that there is a difference between a thing being a mystery and being difficult. A mystery is not necessarily a difficulty. A mystery is a thing covered, hidden, unknown until it is revealed. You may have a difficult problem that needs a lot of working out, or in science a search for something that is very difficult to be known. But that is not necessarily a mystery, and the only thing that can unfold a mystery is a revelation so that a mystery and revelation go together. And revelation is simply an uncovering. And haven't some of you under a reception of this blessed gospel, to stand upon the foundation of the Person, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, seen such a suitability in it and such a sufficiency for your case that you have received it? But when the Holy Spirit uncovers this mystery under the sense of what we sing, "But what can poor lost sinners say, When once they get a view, and hear the Holy Spirit say, 'All this was done for you'?", it opens the mystery of Christ, the mystery of His Person, and it will be teaching to profit. You will see, know, and feel why none but the eternal God, the Son, could be a Ransom or a Substitute for poor sinners.

But Paul speaks very blessedly of being planted - "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Now this planting is very blessed, and it brings us nearer to the ordinance which we are to observe this evening. But there is first of all a being planted into the death and

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resurrection of Christ by the inward response of faith. Now there are some that I have taken notice of, and we ^{can} feel out some hearers. They come and they give no evidence of being planted, but as you watch them, they begin like Lydia to attend unto the thing that is spoken, and we watch for your souls. Whereas at one time there may have been a restlessness and agitation, now there has been a fixedness of attention. I should quite think that Lydia had been by the riverside many times, but nothing was wrought until the day of God's power and the Lord opened her heart that she attended unto the things spoken, and she was planted. Now cannot some of you trace in your soul experience under this preaching of the gospel, when you received it in the love of it and you found that it was like living water going down into your soul unto the very roots of your faith, and you began to feel these roots take hold and draw up from Christ in the gospel that nourishment to your faith? "They that be planted in the House of the Lord shall flourish in the Courts of our God." Oh, it is good to realise that there are some trees of His own right-hand planting, planted by the rivers of water !

Well, what is the effect of it? Why, my friends, the love of Christ constraineth us, and so the Lord Jesus in love has instituted two ordinances in the Church. Divine institutions they are. Simple but profound in their significance. Now the ordinance of believer's baptism takes in the whole of the gospel which culminated in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, so that the Lord has used this symbol to represent His finished salvation, His sufferings, His overwhelming agonies and the love which bore Him through, which many waters could not drown. And Oh! if this love touches your heart as you view Him in all that He did, and the blessed Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you have union with Him, that you are planted in Him, Oh, how willingly you would comply with this commandment!

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So that the grave of the Lord Jesus lies before us, "buried with Him by baptism into His death". And then there is a coming up out of the water as a symbol of being raised together with Him. "God, Who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." Oh, may that love fill the heart of our dear friend who desires to honour Him this evening !

"And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." And He has entered into heaven itself. If it were not for His resurrection, there would be no Head of the Church, it would be a dead body. But we have a living Christ, a living Head, a living Intercessor, a living Advocate, a living Friend in heaven. I believe Richard Dore felt it and his union with Him as we read of him, he looked up into heaven and said, "There is a Man there that loves me and Whom I love." Oh, then, may the Lord help us to humbly follow Him in His ways and prove His ways to be "ways of pleasantness and all His paths peace."

AT THE POOL

Well, friends, this is a most sacred ordinance, and it would be well for us if by the Spirit we realised that the glorious exalted Head of the Church is cognisant of our service this evening, and I believe that He sees in our dear friend here who has ventured to put Him on, sees the travail of His soul, and there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. For I do feel that if by faith we realised that there is no disconnection between Christ, the glorious Head, and His Church here below, but that He ascended on high and there He is, and we, His poor followers here below. And our dear friend has testified of His love to her, and therefore her love to Him, and she desires to honour Him by walking in His ways.