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Sermon preached by Mr. F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton Sunday Morning,
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"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." 1 Thessalonians 5:8-10.

This chapter, and indeed much of the Epistle, is concerned with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Peter's day there were scoffers who said, "Where is the promise of His coming?" "For all things continue the same as they were from the creation of the earth." Nothing happens. You keep talking about the end, but all things continue the same, "Where is the promise of His coming?" There are those scoffers, those infidels and atheists today. But then Peter says, "They are ignorant of this one thing that a thousand years are to the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years." But He will come, but the day no man knows and it is not for us to enquire into, but what should concern us is the Lord's coming to us, when we are called to enter into eternity, the day of our death. That is the coming that should concern us. Because, "As the tree falls, so it shall lie", and as death finds us, so the day of Christ's coming to judgement will find us. It makes that word in the Revelation exceedingly solemn: "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, he that is righteous, let him be righteous still."

The Apostle Paul had great affection and esteem for these Thessalonians, very similar to how he felt concerning the Philippians. He could as much say concerning these Thessalonians that "I am confident that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Then he shows how some at the end will say peace and safety; there have been such, the foolish prophets, deceivers, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child and they shall not escape. But then he turns to these Thessalonians: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief", and we may very warrantably set this particular day as the day of our death, for that is the final coming so far as our own personal experience is concerned.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus is a secret known only to Him. No man knows that day. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day", even the day of our death, "should overtake you as a thief." If we lived every day as though it were our last day, then that last day would not overtake us as a thief. But it will overtake some as a thief, for there are some that sleep, and there are some that are drunken, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day, ye are not of the night nor of darkness, for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." So that in this chapter the Apostle makes the contrast between light and darkness, between sobriety and drunkenness and between day and night. Many are born in darkness, "Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people." It was not so when man was created. Darkness enveloped the earth when sin entered, that was the cloudy and dark day. Darkness covered Adam and Eve, the darkness of ignorance of God, the darkness of unbelief; and this darkness has a power. The Apostle writing to the Colossians thanks God, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." O what a power there is in darkness: the darkness

of this world, ignorance of God, darkness wherein all evil is committed, the darkness of the heart, of the understanding, darkness and death go together.

Peter calls it, "Unto His marvellous light." "Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day, we are not of the night nor of darkness." But all were born blind and therefore this light is the light of life. It was brought to this world by the Lord Jesus Christ. He confessed Himself to be the Light of the world: "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." This is the light, the true light that shines; a spiritual light. It is also the light of the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Revealing light, it is a light that penetrates the heart, the understanding, when one is born again. Light and life enter into the soul simultaneously. The apostle describes it: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts and given us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." That is the true light and only such who have had that in-shining, that life and light entering their hearts are children of light, children of the day. All others are blind. All in gross darkness and that darkness is death, and in that darkness there is a sleep. All natural people really are in a dream. There is nothing real naturally. The only thing that is real is that which comes from heaven, that which the Holy Ghost reveals and what He teaches. How artificial things increasingly become in these modern days, nothing seems to be real, everything is artificial. Everything is deceiving. What a mercy it is if ever the true light has shined into our hearts to give unto us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." So he contrasts sleep with watchfulness; sobriety and drunkenness, and in Luke we have a warning: "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life so that that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man." I do feel that in these perilous times we need these admonitions and exhortations and warnings, and a mercy if we have ears to hear what the Spirit saith to us from the Word of God.

Well, it is a very solemn thing then to be left in a state of nature, to sleep, to live a life of imagination and to be drunken, not necessarily with strong drink. Some are drunken with sin, drunken with the lusts of the flesh, drunken with pleasures; as a nation we are drunken with sport. Drunk and asleep, drunk through sleep. You may feel, some may feel it is an exaggeration, but O if this true light should shine you would find that the state of nature, the state of a body of sin and death, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts can never be exaggerated. Mine has made me to tremble many, many times; what a mercy if our eyes are opened. There is a power in darkness, it blinds. I think we have a description of this condition by nature in the poor mad Gadarene. He had his dwelling among the tombs, among the dead, and he cut himself with stones, and really that is what every sinner does. We are self-destroyed sinners, we destroy ourselves, every sin we commit, O the state that we are in by nature: and the poor man among the tombs, he was naked, destitute, and when his eyes were opened what a sight it must have been to see where he dwelt, the condition he was in, the tombstones he lived among and how he was cutting himself and destroying himself. That is the real condition of every unregenerate person. but the true light shined, the light of life went to him, opened his eyes, cast out the devils, clothed him in the best robe and he sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus, clothed and in a sober, in a right mind; and how he longed to continue with Him, but the Lord said, "Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and

had compassion upon thee." His eyes were opened; he was no longer in the place of darkness, no longer under the power of darkness.

Well, are we? Have we had our eyes opened? Can you see things now that once you could not see? Do you remember the time when you were drunken with this world? But says the Apostle, "The Lord hath not given to us again the spirit of bondage to fear, but hath given unto us the spirit of life and of power and of a sound mind" - sound judgement.

'But let us who are of the day be sober.' This word sober takes in a good deal. We have just hinted at the opposite, being drunken and surfeited with the things of this world, and with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life; 'But let us, who are of the day, be sober.' Writing to the Philippians Paul tells us what this soberness is. He says; "Let your moderation be known unto all men." It is temperance; neither to be lifted up by air nor to be cast down into despair. What we call naturally to be level headed. 'Let us, who are of the day, be sober.' Another way to be sober is, "Be careful for nothing" but pray about everything. My friends, in order to this sobriety, we need an Object. We need a good Foundation; otherwise we shall be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We cannot be sober unless we have a good foundation to stand upon. In this sobriety there is the fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is a strong confidence." Where there is a gracious strong confidence, which has a basis for that confidence, the Lord Jesus Christ in His grace, then being our wisdom, our righteousness, our hope, and leaning upon Him, hanging upon divine faithfulness and immutability that will give us a steadiness. We shall be sober: Be still amid tempestuous motion, "Be still and know that He is God." We shall be sober in the midst of calamities and anxieties, in the midst of afflictions, conflicts and trials realising that all things work together for good; and looking up, through and beyond all second causes to behold the Lord and realise that His divine sovereignty is absolute.

*No thought can fly, nor thing can move,
Unknown to Him that sits above. (Gadsby's 6)*

This will give you sobriety, steadiness, stability. How can there be such sobriety in those that are drunken and in darkness, and those that are children of the night? Why, they know not at what they stumble. I say again a very solemn thing to be born in darkness, go through this world in ignorance of God, live upon imaginations and dreams and castles in the air, and find at last that when the rain descends and the floods come, great is the ruin of the house, great is the ruin of ourselves and of our religion. What a mercy then to have our eyes opened and the true light to shine.

Doubtless many of you have prayed for this: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me." There is something very attractive to my mind in that prayer; it is THY light and THY truth. Nothing else could lead you, everything else is darkness and death and confusion. The source of this light is in God. "Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." The Father of Lights expresses the ineffable light in which the infinite Being of God dwells, unto which no man can approach. The Father of Lights expresses the divine perfections of Jehovah and while those divine perfections cannot be communicated to a creature, yet the benefit of them can. Even the natural sun, we could not bear it, it would consume

us if it was brought near to us, but we receive the benefit of its rays, and so that Light, this eternal Light, comes from the infinite God in all His divine perfections, and there is that light that illuminates the eyes of the understanding, reveals things that a natural eye could never see, and it is by this light that we understand the Scriptures. It is something different from mere natural intelligence. Natural intelligence is good; it is necessary for natural things, but one may be very much advanced in natural science and yet be a child of darkness and be ignorant of God. 'But let us, who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love.' We shall need an armour as we are passing through this wilderness, it is a dark world.

It is full of enemies, full of dangers and perils. 'Putting on the breastplate of faith and love': these weapons are defensive weapons, the breastplate of faith and love. To the Ephesians Paul speaks of it as the breastplate of righteousness. It is the same thing really - faith and love and righteousness. God imputes that righteousness, faith puts it on, it is faith that receives the gift from God; it is the hand or faith that receives spiritual blessings, the blessings of the gospel. It is faith that receives the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and what a defence this faith is; the shield of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, and it defends the breast; it is the breastplate. It defends the heart, the lungs, the most vital parts of the body, and spiritually speaking, my friends; the heart is the seat of salvation. It is in the heart where the Lord Jesus dwells. He dwells there by faith. It is the new heart, "I will put within you a new heart, put my Spirit within, and ye shall live." There is glory there, and upon all that glory there needs to be a defence, the defence is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which faith receives. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." O the fiery darts of the devil and his temptations in the wilderness! Sometimes as we view things it is a wonder that any get safely through.

But the righteous shall hold on his way, and he has the breastplate of righteousness, and he gets the victory, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 'Putting on the breastplate of faith and love.' This putting on of the breastplate is a putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Putting on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." O what a need there is for this armour!

'And for an helmet, the hope of salvation.' The helmet of hope is that grace that hopes in what faith believes in. We are saved by hope, not by the grace of hope, but by the Object of hope, and so here is helmet, the hope of salvation. Strictly speaking it is salvation. 'And for an helmet the hope of salvation' - that salvation that the Lord Jesus Himself wrought out. Therefore it takes in the whole of the Person and work, the temptations, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; that is salvation, and what an helmet that is! What a defence to the head!'

'Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.' The hope of salvation is very blessed. In the 12th of Isaiah, we have the experience of it set before us: "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, He also is become my salvation." You see the two degrees there, the hope of salvation is very blessed, and that hope will hold your soul, but Isaiah says, "Behold, God is my salvation... He also is become my salvation." and when the Holy Ghost brings that salvation into the heart, it may be in answer to that prayer, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." When the blessed Spirit brings it in, it brings in the whole of the Gospel, it brings in the

sin-atonement blood of the Lord Jesus and that fountain that opened upon Calvary's tree is opened in a poor sinner's conscience. It brings in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, an everlasting righteousness, the hope of salvation.

'For God hath not appointed us to wrath.' What a solemn thing it is to be appointed unto wrath, there are some that are. You take that solemn word in the 9th of Romans: "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory." Look at those two solemn characters and the sovereignty of God. There are those that God long endures, vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction. But He makes known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory.

'For God hath not appointed us to wrath.' This is free and sovereign grace, no merit here. Had we been left God would have been just. He owes no man anything. Man destroyed himself when Adam fell. If the Holy and just God had left the whole of mankind to perish He would have been just, He owes man nothing. He created man capable of keeping His law; He created man with a mind capable to receive revelation of His purposes, of His will, of His mind. Man fell, and God was under no obligation to save him at all, but that in the mystery of His will aid of His sovereign love and in the foreknowledge that He had of some, that He chose a people who He would form vessels of mercy. O my friends, if we have any hope, any ground of hope that we were not appointed unto wrath, we shall need eternity to thank and praise Him. I know such might have many, many times a trembling, may have many fears that they are children of wrath, and may see many reasons for it. It will be by free and sovereign grace!

'For God hath not appointed us to wrath.' The wrath to come; a most solemn consideration, the wrath to come will go on through eternity; it will always be the wrath to come to those who are lost. The wrath to come for ages, then still the wrath to come. O how glorious is salvation! 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." This salvation is obtainable; it was wrought out on purpose for His people. This salvation contains in it the whole, complete gospel of the grace of God. Salvation is a tremendous thing. So great that none but the eternal and glorious only begotten Son of God could accomplish it, nobody else could. It is a miracle; the greatest miracle that was ever performed is the miracle of grace.

Well, if we know ourselves we shall know it is a great miracle, to raise from death in sin into a life in Christ Jesus, to turn enemies into friends, to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to transform one from the power of darkness into His marvellous light. To create a new creature, a new heart and to establish a kingdom of grace in a sinner's heart. To bring one who is entirely ignorant of God to know Him and to love Him. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." To obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, this salvation is wrought out in the whole of it. It is a complete salvation and has provided a complete, perfect righteousness to full perfection, and this salvation takes in both body and soul. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the forgiveness of all sins through His merit, His precious blood, and what is more, to justify the ungodly, to be pardoned is great, to be justified is greater. The justification that is through the

righteousness of Christ renders a sinner as though he had never committed a sin, in the sight of God His people are sinless, sinless in Christ. That is salvation.

'For God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.' His death was necessary, but His death was voluntary. It is a point which to my mind is very precious, that God's eternal Son, in His Godhead, knows no necessity, knows no more necessity than does God the Father or the Holy Ghost. He can know no necessity at all, yet in the covenant of grace He has condescended to become His Father's Servant and the Mediator of His people. In the covenant He laid Himself under a necessity for everything to His people. The government was upon His shoulders, the responsibility of every one of His people is upon Him. He has laid Himself under a necessity to save them; He who can know no necessity. Very blessed, if the Holy Ghost should bring this salvation into our heart and to give us some good ground of our interest in it, so as to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ 'Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we, should live together with Him.'

This to my mind does not refer to those that are asleep and those that are awake, but rather this, that whether we wake or sleep, whether we live or die, we should live together with Him, and the Apostle had this confidence with respect to himself: "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Blessed person that is in such a state, "To me to live is Christ." said Paul. Cannot some of you in your measure say the same thing? It means this, that if we have not Christ, if He never manifests Himself to us, if we have not His presence, His blessing, then we do not live, life is not life to us. It is to live upon Christ, to live from Him, to live to Him; take Him out of your life and everything is dead. "To me to live is Christ." if that is true, then "To die is gain", and so Paul says here, "To obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ Who died for us." and this in particular:

*Our Surety knows for whom he stood,
And gave himself a sacrifice. (Gadsby's 82)*

O the love that is in it! And the mystery of His recognition of every Individual for whom He died, who were appointed to obtain salvation. What an appointment. There are appointments: "As it is appointed unto men once to die", so Christ died for His people. That is an appointment. I often think of this as we are gathered together, the glorious and living Head in heaven, He looks down. His interest in this world is the Church; He has got no other interest, it is His people, and when He looks down upon this congregation He knows those that are His. I often wonder about myself, and when I look down at the people there are some here who are appointed unto salvation. That kingdom of grace established in their hearts and therefore, living or dying, awake or asleep we should live together with Him. O to live with Him now! No doubt some of you more frequently than ever pray –

*O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb. (Gadsby's 958)*

Well, may the Lord give us His Spirit's witness that we are children of the day and not of the night.
Amen.