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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on
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Text: II Cor. iv. 17, 18.

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

There is much heavy affliction amongst us, and we would hear the voice of God in it; but the blessed Scriptures come to every condition in life, and also in the hour and article of death. In this chapter Paul speaks of having the ministry of the Spirit. In the preceding chapter he has been showing the excellency of the Gospel administration above that of the law. Therefore he commences this chapter: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry", that is of the Gospel, as we have received mercy we faint not". And he goes on to show the secret of this strength whereby the Lord's people do not faint in their afflictions, conflicts, tribulations, and trials: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". And where once that light has shined, it is a true, a heavenly, a spiritual light, by which alone the things of God are revealed.

And therefore from that blessing there is this gracious confidence of faith, that "we are troubled on every side", but having the true light by which we see light in God's light, "we are not distressed", not without a way of escape. "We are perplexed, but not in despair", having that light in our hearts and beholding the glory of Christ in whom is a fulness, beholding that Man whom God has made strong for Himself, having laid help upon One that is mighty, "We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed". Oh it is a blessed secret! It is the only real support, and the Lord said, "My kingdom is not of this world" at all. Some of you may have known what it is to have been brought to self-despair, and in the midst of united trials and perplexities, and viewing the world as it is a waste howling wilderness, full of confusion which gets worse and worse, and yet you have felt the comfort of that truth, "My kingdom is not of this world"; and when by this revealing light shining into the heart, that kingdom of grace here, and the kingdom of glory hereafter, has been unfolded to your faith, oh how confirming! How it does strengthen, stablish, settle, root, and ground a poor sinner in Christ!

But then it comes to practice: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus". This may try some of us. Do we so live? The Apostle said: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory". But ye are dead, are dead to the world, its pleasures, its maxims; or are we conformed to it? My friends, it is a solemn day, and I do feel the necessity of being warned myself. I was this afternoon, and I would warn you with the warning that I myself have been warned of God. In this modern day I feel deeply for young people, and also for parents with their families. In schools and in the present-day education, and the modern inventions, the wireless and the television, everything is eating, and I am afraid entering a good deal into the Causes of truth. It will bring death. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord", because "know ye not that your body is the temple

of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price?" "Know ye not that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself?" What then? "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus", to die with Him. If we have union with Him, we shall die with Him. Blessed death! And is that all? No; "that the life of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest in our body" by dying with Him. How can it be if we are not dead to the world? Oh says Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live". Yes, a better life. Ah, you may lose your life and find a better life than you lose! "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." I have desired that this might be effected by the Spirit in the hearts of those that believe, to speak because you believe, having the same spirit of faith as those that have gone before.

And then the Apostle makes a wonderful declaration: "For all things are for your sakes". It appears very otherwise, as much otherwise as when it is said of Him, "All things are put under His feet; but now we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus". And as things are at present, it does not appear yet that all things are put under Him. Looking at the world and the nations, the perilous and evil times we are in, it would almost appear that the devil has control, and that everything is under the devil's feet; but they are not. Nothing transpires but at the permission of God. His judgments are in the earth, and there is no time, circumstance, or dispensation which can alter this declaration: "All things are for your sakes". Whatever is going on in the world, and in your circumstances, in your homes, in your estate, in your business, in your body, in your soul, this remains true in your lowest condition; "All things are for your sakes". "That the abundant grace." How abundant? Why, greater than all your sins: "Grace did much more abound", grace that is more powerful, and with greater authority than all the powers of this world. "That the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

So that the Apostle lays down these things as a ground for strength. "For this cause we faint not", because of what the Spirit reveals to us by His gracious inshining, of God Himself, of God in Christ, of who He is, of His divine ability. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Well, it will be a mercy if this is so. Some of you may have had many fears with myself, that your religion will decay, fade out, and die with your body. I have feared that, and feared my preaching will; that as my powers fail, so everything of my religion will fail with it. But this Scripture reassures the Lord's people, and as the Apostle also encouraged them, that he "came not to them with enticing words of man's wisdom", for this purpose - "that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God". And it is a mercy to examine ourselves, and so much the more as we see the day approaching, for the hour is coming, my friends, when the world will appear to us just what it is. Oh if we could but view things as we should see them then, even while we are in health and strength, it would enable us to live to the honour and

glory of God. "For which cause we faint not." Very blessed, these few words! There is a cause why His people do not faint. There is enough to make them faint. As I feel it, there is every reason to faint and despair - every reason. There is every reason in myself and in this world why I should faint and despair. But there is a cause, says Paul, - "For which cause we faint not"; and that cause is in Christ Himself. It will make Him precious, and there will be times when you will enter into your closet, into your secret place, and pour out your heart before Him, cast upon Him your cares and burdens, and faith will believe that He cares for you. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

And the Lord has given means for these renewings. He has for instance given this blessed Word. But we need, with the Word, the Holy Ghost, and we need a living faith. "For though our outward man perish, yet the inward is renewed day by day." It brings to our mind the 92nd Psalm. One means by which the Lord renews His people, renews their strength, replenishes their life, is this: "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him". That is to say, that this bringing forth fruit in old age by being planted into Christ, and into the truth under the preaching of the Gospel, that in old age the fruit that His people bring forth shows His faithfulness and immutability, bringing His people through all the changing scenes of life. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." David - oh what an experience he had, what a history, what a life his was! He said this: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". As though he would say, "I believed I shall see it", and so he did not faint. No, he was saved by hope. Well, this is the way we shall have to live, to pursue though faint.

Then he comes to the text: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment". And this will be true when this true light shines into our hearts, this living heavenly inshining. It will be true of the heaviest affliction if it lasts for years. I would not speak lightly of affliction, my friends, but the Apostle has laid down the ground upon which a poor afflicted saint can rest, and rest in hope. I venture to say that if the Lord should come and fill an afflicted saint with His ~~peace~~ heavenly peace, it would take the curse from the affliction, and they would be able to say, "My affliction is light". But it is light also comparatively, as for instance when we consider the deserts of our sins. Oh when one is given a hope of heaven, and at the same time realizes that they deserve hell, are brought into that experience of which we sing: "I looked for hell, He brought me heaven", it will make your affliction light. You will say, "Lord, I deserve more than this; it is of Thy mercies that I am not consumed". And when you look at the world in its wickedness, dancing the hellward road apace, to come into your heart, "Who maketh thee to differ?"

And then, comparison with the sufferings of the Lord Jesus:

"Our light affliction". I think we mentioned the other day how the opening verses of the 69th Psalm were made such a support as we truly felt to be sinking in deep mire, where there is no standing. For there are different kinds of affliction - affliction of the mind, of the body, of the soul; and in my judgment soul affliction is the heaviest. If ever you have known what it is to sink in deep mire, and fresh deeper discoveries of the mire of your own corrupt nature, you will wonder whether you will ever rise. But under these feelings I read the 69th Psalm, and that Psalm is prophetic and concerns the Lord Jesus, and He Himself said, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing". And see Him in His sacred, sinless human nature, trembling as He took that cup: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done". Oh the agonies of the Lord Jesus! "Oh thou hideous monster sin!" "Our light affliction." It is only as the blessed Spirit thus leads us into the mystery of a suffering Redeemer, that we can truly say, "Our light affliction". Paul went further: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us".

But there is another reason, which comes into this second part of the text, why affliction is light and but for a moment compared with eternal glory. But this is wonderful: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". It works it. The only Scripture that comes to my mind to interpret this is that in the Romans: "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us". There is the secret there. The love of God is so shed abroad in the heart of an afflicted child of God that he sees love inscribed upon all God's dealings. "It worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Makes the affliction light, but for a moment; and in the place of it it works, not a light glory and not for a moment, but a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And this eternal weight of glory is not an oppression unbearable. No; because says the Lord, "He will change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body". And His dear people will be in such a glorified condition as to be able to bear the eternal weight of glory, and their glorified spirits united at the resurrection day to their bodies will be able to sustain an eternity of spiritual worship. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen."

Oh to live by faith! When I read and meditate upon such words as these, I feel so ashamed of my profession and of my life. Do you? I mean, look the thing in the face. What do we look at most - the things that are seen? What have you looked at most to-day? What has most attention - your body or your soul? What do you think most about - time or eternity? The time is short. Yes it is, and not all the clever people in the world can make it ~~five~~ minutes longer; and that is an encouragement, though solemn. You look at some people, how they are going on, and they bring wicked devices to pass, spread themselves like a green bay tree, live as though they were going to carry everything before them. They are looking at

things that are seen, and have no eyes of faith to see anything else; but oh my friends, how sinful it is that we should profess to possess faith and live so much upon things that are seen! Peter says, "In whom, though ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory". Do you ever look at those Scriptures really? Oh may we each take heed, not only how we hear, but how we read the Word of God! We need the blessed Spirit to apply the power of the Word to our souls, both in a way of conviction, and of correction, and of instruction, and of comfort and consolation. So Moses confessed, or rather it was said of him: "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible".

So that really this can be written right across this text: "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man turn back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that turn back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul". "While we look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen." And this is what baffles carnal reason. Oh my friends, if we live by faith, it lives upon unseen things! And have you that evidence of life in your soul which can ~~only~~ be fed, and nourished, and maintained by the unseen things of God? Do you feel conscious, as you sit in the sanctuary, that nothing can be brought in here from the outside world that could contribute in the least to your happiness to your soul? You must have something from heaven, from God Himself. While we look at the things which are not seen. The natural eye cannot see these things: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"; but they are revealed unto us by His Spirit, even the deep things of God". And you will want deep things. You have got deep things. Death is a deep place, and you will want that from God which is deeper than your sins and goes deeper than the grave, and this is it: "As sin has reigned unto death, even so will grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life". And you can feel it. My friends, the knowledge and the sight of unseen things - for some of you know what it is to see unseen things, and to taste and handle them. It will enable you to say, "For to me to live is Christ, but to die is gain".

"While we look not at the things that are seen." Of course, we do look at them, and sometimes it is very blessed to look at them from the height of Zion: "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion". Have you ever had a look at this poor, miserable, crazy world from the height of Zion, and seen it to be just what it is, so that it has brought that exclamation into your heart: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us"? What is the matter with them if they get it all? When you are in the height of Zion and have a faith's view of these things in Christ, view the power of His grace, the sweetness of His mercy, the everlastingness of His immutable love, the unsearchableness of His riches, and the blessedness of His redemption - "our light affliction". I am sure it will be so.. But for a moment, you remember that poor, afflicted, young woman, Louie Cooper,

~~I saw her fairly & accurately~~

I saw her fairly frequently. I think she was bedridden for over twenty-five years; but she could say, "My light affliction, but for a moment". Who can express the blessedness of a life of faith! And Paul said, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me". A remarkable expression - "the life that I now live in the flesh". Not that he lived in the flesh, or was after it; but he was in it, and you are in it and still have the flesh of fallen nature, and will till you die. And it makes a conflict, the fight of faith. But he says, "The life that I now live in the flesh", with all the opposition within and without, the carnal mind, a deceitful and desperately wicked heart, yet "I live by the faith of the Son of God". That is to say, he looked out of himself, knew himself to be a wretched man, but saw the Lord Jesus a blessed door of hope. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So for this cause we faint not. Oh beautiful experience through this chapter! But there is one thing in it that I felt was very solemn. I ought not to pass it over. "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Is it hid? We try in our little way to unfold these mysteries; are they hid to you? I don't mean now, have you a full assurance of your interest? But are they so hidden to you, you neither know anything about it, and don't want to? I cannot think that it is so; otherwise you would not be here. What have you come for? Is it not this? Not to look upon things that are seen, but at those things that are not seen. "Oh how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!"

"For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." What a distinction; different in their nature. That the things which are seen are temporal, nobody can deny. A worldling cannot deny it. It is his great disappointment that they are temporal. Oh if a worldling could live for ever and could have more and more, he would say, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant". But they are temporal, whether he likes it or not. "The wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." But the things which are not seen are eternal, and that is what you poor dying souls need. Why? Because of the eternal God. And what is a comfort at last? "The eternal God is thy refuge." And what is commensurate with eternity when you look at it? Nothing but the eternal God. Oh to come to the end and have the Spirit's testimony in your heart that the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!
