

Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening Dec. 25th 1960

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Corinthians 9:15

We have this blessed gift variously described in the Word of God, as for instance — "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9) We shall never exhaust the text, although I myself am very quickly emptied and exhausted; but it is a mercy that the fullness of Christ is inexhaustible, and is not diminished by the millions who have drawn from it. He himself is not diminished; he knows no decay and so with respect to all that the Father has given to the church in him, nothing can be lost, nothing can fade away, nothing can die, Oh what a portion he is. Jeremiah found him the same and confessed, "The Lord is my portion therefore will I hope in him." (Lamentations 3:24) So you begin to see that this blessed unspeakable gift does not increase of itself, but it does increase in the communications of its benefits and effects to the soul by the Spirit, and in that very sense we are to understand "He must increase, but I must decrease." This blessed Person must increase, not in himself. He can know no increase, his kingdom can know no increase; his kingdom is the whole election of grace; but that kingdom does increase manifestly. Oh then may the Lord increase in our hearts and in our soul affections this evening 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.'

We tried to show this morning who the Giver is. The Father gave the greatest gift that could possibly be given to his people, and with him he freely gives them all things. What a gift it is! Therefore if you are his because he is God's, all things are yours. Thanks be unto God. Oh how unspeakable is this gift! And we tried to show too that the unspeakableness of the gift was in his person, that were he other than he is declared to be, he would not be unspeakable, nor would he be incomprehensible; and yet you will find that you need one who is unspeakable, infinite in his person and in his fullness. While that union that subsists between his people and himself, does not and cannot convey infinity to them, yet they do receive the benefits of that which is infinite. What a Gift this is! Oh how it shines! How it puts the world out! And what a coming was that of the Lord Jesus who brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. "Drop down O heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open." (Isaiah 45:8) and what a pouring out of righteousness when the Lord Jesus came in the fullness of time, condescended to be made of a woman, made under the law, in order that he might fulfil the law; made under the law so that he might endure its curse.

We concluded by speaking of the unspeakableness of the merits of Christ as being the authority of the offices that he occupied for his people. And you will need such an authority, and this is the blessed law of the gospel. It is the authority of the gospel and its authority is greater than that of the good, holy just law of God that was given to Moses. There was nothing in that gift. Nothing was given by the law of Moses. It was a holy demand; it was a commandment. It gave no life, no ability and it showed no mercy. But oh this gift of gifts appears! 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' We also tried to speak of his offices as a great High Priest, and in the offering of himself without spot unto God. My friends, if we

are not interested in that one great sin-atonement sacrifice, we shall die with our sins upon our head. Oh that we might have warrant to sing the hymn

*My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didn't bear,
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there. (Gadsby's 125)*

Oh to know it; to know that the Son of God is come, to know it by his heavenly manifestation of it in our hearts, and to have the witness of the Spirit that we are in him that is true! It just brings to our remembrance that we should repeat for the importance of it, that where there is a gift, there must be a recipient, and consider whether we have received Christ Jesus the Lord. It is an all-important point with respect to the text, and only those who have received the gift can thank God for it. It would indeed be impudence and presumption to thank a person who had never given you anything. But have we any evidence that we have received this unspeakable gift in some measure, by receiving something through the Spirit by the Gospel? The next best thing my friends, is to find in your soul two things - but we must be careful of the nature of them - a living need that nothing can satisfy but Christ, and also a living desire which none but Christ can fulfil. And if you have that much of the element of Christ in the reception of him, cast not away that confidence. But if it is a living need and desire, you will not be able to live upon the need, nor upon the desire. You will give him no rest until you are satisfied from his fullness.

'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,' The Father gave him, according to Isaiah, as a witness to the people. "In the beginning was the Word the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) The Lord Jesus is the representative of God to his people, and he is given for a witness, and he bears witness to the covenant of grace. He declares the decree of election. He is a faithful and true Witness. He bears witness to all the purposes of God in all the covenant promises which are Yea and Amen in him. Oh what a gift this is. How full it is. And also he is given as a Leader and Commander to the people do you need a Guide, a Leader, "He led them forth by a right way," (Psalm 107:7) and oh the qualifications for each of these offices that he bears. A leader must know the way; he knows the way from the beginning and he was a leader to Jacob; "Behold, I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.... I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Genesis 28: 15) What Christ is to his people by the Father he is made to every individual pilgrim and you will be brought to need what he is. He is infinite wisdom to direct as a leader; He knows the end from the beginning. His divine sovereignty has appointed all things, the bounds of our habitation. A Witness, a Leader and he is given for a Commander that is the Captain of salvation, a Commander in the gospel. Gospel commandments are very blessed when the Lord commands he gives power to obey, a will to obey. When the gospel requires from poor sinners, there is given that which is required and all this is in the richness, the fullness that is in Christ. He says of himself "Riches and honour, are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness." (Proverbs 8:18)

'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' The church is also a part of this gift; that is to say, all the graces of the Spirit in the church, in the ministry, the graces of the Spirit in the hearts of his people proceed from Christ. There is nothing that you can read in the word of God, there is nothing that can be declared in the gospel, there is nothing that you can feel your need of as a poor sinner but what must be found in and received from Christ. Oh what an eternal portion he is: 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.'

Then again, with him there is given eternal life "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."(John 10:10) You can substitute nothing for life. It is a vital point, and no life but the life of Christ is eternal life. He said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also."(John 14:19) The Holy Ghost in regeneration communicates Christ's life to sinners "and you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins." (Ephesians 2:1) How unspeakable is eternal life in the soul! You cannot define it; you cannot explain it any more than you can explain natural life; and every kind of life is of God. Animal life, vegetable life, human life, spiritual life - they are all a mystery. A mercy if we can truly feel that we receive from Christ spiritual life, different from that which was breathed into the nostrils of Adam: "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) It was immortal when he became a living soul, and that immortality he never loses. But this spiritual life is a part of the fullness of Christ, who "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."(2 Timothy 1:10) If we have a living religion, it is because Christ is the life of our souls, and the life of our faith, which is the root. It is very precious to feel, and you do feel. In a spiritual believer there is a conception by the Holy Spirit of Christ in the heart in regeneration, His life in the new creature brings a complete set of new faculties, a new root. And that root at times will strike down by the scent of living water, and this is in Christ. This is what he brought. Oh the dense darkness and death there would be - the world would be in dense darkness, but for this glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke, concerning his coming he is spoken of as the mercy. Not mercies, but mercy, because he is the mercy of mercies. Every mercy is in him and therefore the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever it reacheth unto the clouds. Oh divine mercy is very sweet; it is free. It is a sweet sound to a poor sinner who is nothing in himself, and mercy is the only standing ground before the throne of grace.

Another title he bears is that he is the Desire of all nations; that is to say, he becomes the one object of faith. My friends, we need to examine ourselves upon each point when we sing:

*Object of my first desire,
Jesus crucified for me;
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in thee. (Gadsby's 988)*

What a gift this is! How it does emphasize the love that gave it. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?"(Romans 8:32) And so in the Revelation we read, "He that overcometh will I give to inherit all things."

'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' This gift of the Lord Jesus he still dispenses, indeed through his Godhead, sufferings, blood, and merit, and now exalted on high a Conqueror, having received gifts for men. He still pours out righteousness from the skies and that vital contact of union that subsists between him as the head and his dear people is made manifest by the Spirit by his inward intercession in prayer, and therefore there is the exercise of faith. He will be enquired of by the house of Israel to dispense and communicate these blessings.

Christ has blessings to impart. (Gadsby's 956)

Oh how full he is and he is a gift!

Therefore all the graces of the Spirit, for the Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son, all these graces in the church of God including the gift of the ministry proceed from Christ, the exalted and risen Redeemer. The final victory will be a victory over death and hell. But the Lord Jesus having overcome all, and being now sat down with his Father in his throne, gives to his people the benefits of his victory over sin, and death, and hell; so that the benefits of Christ as the portion of his people were not concluded when he ascended on high. Oh when he left his people, he did not leave them destitute! The union that subsists, and ever will, between an exalted Saviour and poor sinners here upon earth, is very blessed, and we shall be brought to live upon him in our souls.

Take the ministry. Oh what need we have to thank God for his unspeakable gift which brings us just this! In this gift is the gift of power. . He himself says: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." (Matthew 28:18) Well he needs no power, he is omnipotent; and everything that constitutes that fullness is in Christ, not for himself, but to be communicated to his people. And upon that declaration he encourages poor ministers to go forth and gives them the promise: "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) If it were not for that I should have finished years ago. But this is in the gift — power. And you need power. We need the power of Christ in our souls in salvation. We need power to believe, the blessed power of the Holy Spirit. We need power to hear, as well as to speak; and all the provision that God has made in the church proceeds from the fullness of life, and grace, and merit, and power, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are unsearchable riches. Oh how rich is that person who has the Lord for his portion! But you may depend upon it, my friends, you cannot serve God and mammon, neither can you walk in that narrow way and take the world with you.

'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' So this is the gift of the Father to the church. But what is an amazing thing is this, that it is an infinite condescension. But have you ever considered what is the object of Christ's first desire, and what the greatest gift the Father has given to his Son? We have considered that the greatest gift he has given to his people is his Son, and the greatest gift he has given to his Son is the church. Oh how amazing it is that poor unworthy sinners, full of sin and infirmity, creatures of a day for each of whom the grave is waiting, yet that church is the joy that was set before the Lord Jesus! So that she

becomes his bride. The ineffable union expressed in the Word of God as the bridegroom and the bride; the vine and the branches; the head and the body. It is a mystery. Do you believe it? Do you receive it? Is there in your heart this that goes up to heaven?

*Oh let a lasting union join,
My soul to Christ, the living Vine! (Gadsby's 142).*

Don't you feel that everything comes from him, and faith as it were sucks at the breasts of Zion's consolations? I believe it is in this way that I know him. There is a kind of a view of Christ in this knowledge. Those of you who desire him and need him, and from your heart are compelled to say 'Give me Christ, or else I die.'- if you examine your soul you will find that there is a knowledge of him in that. I have believed at times, for a moment, that I should know him if ever I am brought to heaven to see him, I wonder sometimes whether I shall be there for I am a great sinner. The biggest wonder in heaven will be if I get there, the greatest sinner. God knows I feel it. It makes this gift very precious. Oh for our little bit of a being and yet it has eternity in it. I sometimes look at the people and see here as many eternities as there are people. We shall each spend an eternity of our own. Doesn't it make this gift infinite, that he was no less than God? "Whom, having not soon, we love."(1 Peter 1:8) Do you? It is a great thing to love him. There to only one reason for it - because he first loved you. And if you have received him in your affections, it is because he first loved you.

'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' Now a word or two with respect to this 'thanks.' It is very solemn. You might say, 'Well, I should not have thought that thanksgiving is solemn.' It is! I have often taken notice of the opening of the 107th Psalm. It says "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." And in the 50th Psalm "What hast thou to do to take my name into thy lips?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within bless His holy name." (Psalm 103) Have we got anything within us that can bless His name? Only the life of God, only grace, only the Spirit's work can. What we are cannot bless and thank him. Thanks is a practical thing, and that word last Friday would be in practical thanksgivings "I beseech you brethren that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1) through this unspeakable gift and the fullness of the mercies that are in him. Don't you think that would be thanksgiving, a presenting your body a living sacrifice? Some of you that really fear God, do you ever ask yourself the question, whether you can thank God for the gospel of his grace, for Christ and all that he is and has done? Do you ever ask yourself the question why you are hindered in presenting your body a living sacrifice unto God?

Then to thank him will be to walk worthy of him and of the dignity of his high calling. If we are in this text, we are called unto glory, to his kingdom and his glory, and we shall walk acceptably to that high calling. Also we shall acknowledge him in thanksgiving, both with respect to creation and his kind providence, and also in casting our care upon him "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God."(Philippians 4:6) It is honouring to him. Practical gratitude flows

out to him in walking in His commandments and precepts, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

This chapter is concerned with almsgiving, liberality to the poor saints and the support of the house of God, and Paul concludes with this after he exhorted them to this ministration of their abundance. What is that compared with the great gift of God, the unspeakable gift of Christ and all the benefits that are in him? Oh may the Lord enable us to live, to his honour and glory! I feel to come exceedingly short, and infirmities increase, but we have no other helper, no other refuge, and sometimes it is rest, when you come to the end of self, to prove that you have not come to the end of God. When you have come to the end of your own wisdom, then says he: "Ask of God who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not."(James 1:5) He never upbraids a poor forgetful erring sinner. He does not say to one, not even a minister who comes so short, forgets lesson after lesson, he does not upbraid him and say 'You have learned that time and again.' No, he does not upbraid, but out of the fullness of his wisdom he directs.

Oh may the Lord then give us to draw from this fullness, and to know that blessedness of which Paul speaks to the Colossians "Ye are complete in Him." My friends, that is what I covet. Ah you think of it! If the Holy Spirit could bear witness concerning yourself - Ye are complete in this Christ - complete in all that he is. He is your righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption.

Amen.