

1028
LaG 692

1028

Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel Brighton
Lord's Day evening 26th February 1961

Text: Then they said one to another: We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

(2 Kings 7:9)

We opened the day's services this morning by two men walking to Emmaus, and they were communing one with another. Somewhat different were their communications from these two lepers. We also read: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." (Malachi 3:16) Communion of saints is not only a sacred experience and exercise, but my friends, it does show a healthy state among the Lord's people. There is a deep that coucheth beneath the history of Israel. They were a type of the church of God in the wilderness. Not a type of the church of God in heaven, but going through this wilderness world in all its uncertain paths, their wanderings here and there, and all the exercises of their souls, and the extremities into which they were brought – the way the Lord led them. And in the New Testament we have the same thing, as the Lord went about doing good, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind; and He is exactly the same today, as yesterday, and for ever. It is a point of rest for faith to truly believe in the eternal, immutable God. Nothing alters Him. He "carries on His undisturbed affairs," however the world may be disturbed and convulsed. Nothing affects God. "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are (to Him) as grasshoppers." (Isaiah 40:22)

Well, in this case, we have these four lepers; and leprosy, as you read in Leviticus, was an incurable disease, and a type of sin. These four lepers were in the entering in of the gate. They were not allowed inside: For when the priest had pronounced a man to be a leper, he was to rend his garment, shave his head, and cover his upper lip, and go outside the city, and if he heard anybody approaching him, to cry out, "Unclean! unclean!" Have you ever been there? Do you know that leper? It was the same character in the New testament: "There came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (Mark 1:40) He was very much like Esther. It was not according to the law. It was against the law for that leper to come near the Lord Jesus. And you may depend upon it, the people surrounding the Lord Jesus made themselves scarce, lest they should be contaminated. But He put forth His hand and touched the filthy flesh of that leper. Do you know that leper? Have you ever been a sinner, had a loathsome disease in your loins, and your wounds to stink because they were corrupt?

Four lepers. And not only were they diseased, but in this famine both diseased and starving. We often say that real, vital religion is an experience. We may have a knowledge of things, just mere notion:

"The little too that's known,
Which, children-like we boast,
Will fade, like glow-worms in the sun,
Or drops in ocean lost."

(792)

But what the Lord teaches us in experience, we never forget. We may forget things that we acquire and read up, some emotion in the flesh may be lost, and what goes into the outward ear may just evaporate, but the work of the Holy Ghost remains.

But in this state of extremity, of their being diseased and starved, they commune one with another. I have often thought about those that feared God and spoke often one to another, can visualise them. It would not be a lot of religious gossip, nor backbiting. But you can imagine if these lepers, when they were cleansed, were among them; and the woman with the issue of blood, if she was in conversation with them; and the woman that washed His feet, and wiped them with the hair of her head. If those were among them, they would have had something to talk about. But these four lepers were in the same case. Wonderful to see poor sinners mourning together, each one saying he is the chief, the worst. O how suitable it makes the Gospel and the great Physician! "He is able to save them to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews 7:25) O then, press through the crowd, leprous souls, in thy foul condition.

But this brought into exercise a venturing faith. Not a full assurance of faith, but a venturing faith. I wonder if there are any who are brought just there. They have got no promise, but come to this conclusion, that, if they sit still, they die also: "Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians." (v.4) And so they ventured. This venturing faith is honouring to God. Queen Esther ventured, although it was not according to the law. She broke the law; she was not called in unto the king. But called or not, it was: Go in, or die – and so she ventured in. As the leper, it was against the law that he should come to the Lord Jesus; but law or no law, his disease and extremity were such that he would venture, and if he perished, would perish there. And Queen Esther would perish suing deliverance for her people. So these lepers were brought to a venturing faith. But the Lord had gone before them. They would never have known that if they had not ventured. Is there some poor sinner here, brought to their lost, foul condition, and yet feels they have no real right unto the Gospel, but they need it, and realise that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good? Remember this: that if these lepers had still sat where they were, they would have died of starvation and their disease. But they did not know the Syrians had fled. The Lord went before them. "Who can tell?" said Jonah. If you have a "Who can tell?" in your heart, cast it not away.

And the Lord had gone before them, and made the host of the Syrians hear a noise, and they fled. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. He can influence every member of our body, and those of our enemies, if it is His will. In the preceding chapter, He did the same thing to the eyes of the enemies, and when they came down to him, Elisha said: "Smite this people, I pray Thee, with blindness. And He smote them with blindness according to the words of Elisha." (v.18) But in the case before us, the Lord made them to hear a noise. He had control of the eyes so they became blind; He had control of their ears and caused them to hear a noise of chariots. O my friends, faith has a blessed Object, an all-sufficient Saviour, One who is infinite in wisdom, and yet His methods are mysterious! I have desired that, if there are any who are exercised in their souls, who have come to a point that we sing sometimes: "Give me Christ, or else I die" – what then?

"Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

Who can tell but the Lord has gone before you? You remember that when the Israelites came out of Egypt, and were brought to the Red Sea, and the Egyptians pursued them, the Lord said to Moses: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." How could they? There was the Red Sea, and the Egyptians pursuing them. But He said: "Go forward." He put that before the command: "Stretch out thine hand over the sea." (Exodus 14:15-16)

Venture on Him. Who can tell? Nothing is too hard for Him; no sin too great for His pardoning grace; no guilt, no stain too deep for His precious, sin-atonement blood; no enemy too strong but what He can subdue.

So these lepers came unto the camp, and found it empty. All their enemies had fled. What a relief this must have been to them! O what wonders the Lord has wrought! He sent His servant Elijah to be fed by ravens, a most unlikely bird to feed. But the Lord delights to show His divine sovereignty and lordship: "I gave Egypt and Ethiopia for thee...I will give men for thee." (Isaiah 43:3,4) Nothing can stand in the way to frustrate the purposes of His sovereign grace. So they found plenty of provision, and silver and gold.

"Then said they one to another, We do not well." They look then beyond themselves. They knew there was a famine in the city, and they had this discovered to them as they ventured into the camp of the Syrians, found all their enemies fled. It is a wonderful thing in experience. In the preceding chapter again, the young man, a servant of Elisha, said: "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Have you ever felt that? Hosts of enemies within and without. O if we are led to examine ourselves, and the Lord searches our hearts, if He gives us also to see and feel the hostile wilderness through which we are passing, we shall wonder how we shall survive! But Elisha answered: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." It did not appear to be so. There did not seem to be anybody much but Elisha and his servant. But here the Lord had the sovereign control of the eyes of this young man. "Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." O that was strength to his faith! I believe it is dear old Berridge who says:

"If thou press on, the crows will fly,
Or if thou faint, to Jesus cry,
And He will send supplies."

(302)

But it comes to experience, and there is something very blessed about it. Some of you may trace some of these things as you look back in the many years that the Lord has led thee in the wilderness.

"They said one to another, We do not well." This is the acting of the tender fear of God in the conscience. They had a sweet hope of deliverance. They were brought from famine into plenty. It would indeed be a great thing if the Lord, by His Spirit, would bring some who fear His great name, who are truly exercised in their hearts, to this point: "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings." And therefore this plenty sets before us the fulness of Christ, the all-sufficiency of that provision that is made in the Gospel of His grace. "How beautiful...are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace...that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7-8)

We would try and speak, then, a little of a day of good tidings. It is a Gospel day, and one great good tidings is this – and it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15) I will venture to say that the Lord came to save none but the worst, the chiefest, the greatest of sinners. And if you are made a sinner by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, truly feel that there is no sinner to be found that is greater than you – and I will tell you why, because you will know more about yourself than you do about anybody else – you will be made to possess your sins. You will know they are yours, not somebody else's. There is a kind of stamp on

them, a terrible stamp. We read that the Lord blots out sins as a thick cloud, and you will feel that yours will be the thickest and blackest cloud. I remember going, on one occasion, to Irthlingborough, where there are many smoking chimneys, and there was one belching out black smoke, and I felt that would be mine.

“This is a day of good tidings” – good tidings of joy. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was hailed: “I bring you good tidings of great joy,” said the angelic host. (Luke 2:10) But we need the Holy Spirit to bring it into our hearts. If so, we shall have been brought to the end, not only of all perfection, but the end of all satisfaction in the things of this life. So vital, so urgent will be salvation, so deep the disease of sin, so tremendous eternity, and so short time, that the consideration of the Gospel of God’s grace will eat up every other consideration. And faith will see this too, that to possess the Lord Jesus Christ is to possess everything. O what a rich portion He is!

Good tidings from heaven. And the Lord Jesus came to bring them. He came to declare the decrees of Jehovah. He came to execute the purposes of God, the covenant of grace. He came to fulfil the law, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel. And that to be conferred upon, communicated to, poor dying men, that they may partake of Christ, that they may be united to Him, and related to Him, that they might be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, that they may be justified freely by His grace, that they might be born again.

“This is a day of good tidings.” Do you understand Gospel language? “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.” (Psalm 89:15) Some of you know the joyful sound, but you are waiting for the assurance of the Spirit in your conscience of your interest in the Gospel. Well, if you are truly waiting for the Lord by the Spirit, it must be because He is waiting for you. Do you receive this good news? I don’t mean at the moment, do you receive the riches, the blessing, the life, the comfort of them, but do you receive them by faith, and believe in the Son of God, believe that He is God’s eternal Son? Have you ever had a glimpse of His glory, so that He has become to you as an apple tree among the trees of the wood? From Him alone, and no one else, can spiritual fruit be found. And do you hunger and thirst after this living God?

O the Gospel is good tidings! The sum and centre of it is God’s dear incarnate Son, Immanuel. He is the Sun in the firmament of the Gospel, and will by the Spirit be made the very centre of our souls, and the object of our faith. Can you do without Him? If you don’t know Him, if you don’t need Him, if you can do without Him, what a solemn state you are in! What can make up for Him? Is there anything that you could be put into possession of whereby you be so satisfied to say, “I can do without all your preaching, without the Scriptures and the Gospel”? O my friends, the good news of an everlasting kingdom, a “kingdom of immense delight,” a spiritual kingdom which is not of this world, a kingdom of grace in the world in your heart, a kingdom of glory above! And “the Lord will give grace and glory.” O what is put in possession to poor, unworthy sinners!

We need to pause when we consider these great and eternal realities, which are nothing to do with this world. Think of it for a moment, that this infinite One, this glorious eternal Son of God, equal with the Father, He who created all that is, yet in the mystery of godliness has made Himself knowable and possessible, that His dear people are united to Him as the body to the Head, as the branches to the Vine, related unto Him as the Husband to the wife! Do you believe it? If the blessed Spirit should accomplish in your soul all that makes up salvation, O what a blessed person you would be! And He will, because Paul says: “Ye are

complete in Him.” (Colossians 2:10) I have seen it, and it has been attractive to me. And if the Holy Spirit would bear witness with my spirit that I am complete in Christ, I should be perfectly satisfied, and willing to die. You think of it: “Complete in Him!” Why, it makes a place in Buckingham Palace look a poor affair. Well, Moses thought so. Pharaoh’s court was very grand. I have no doubt that Pharaoh’s daughter thought Moses was a fool to refuse to be her adopted son, with all the luxuries of the court, and rather choose affliction with the people of God. But “this is a day of good tidings.” There is always a reason for things. There is nothing ridiculous in vital godliness. Those Egyptians did not know the secret, but Moses “had respect unto the recompense of the reward” – which put the Egyptian court out of countenance. O what would some of you give, if this night you could find Him whom your soul loves, and be swallowed up in Him, to so possess Him as to possess all that He is and has! I should be willing to dwell in a poor little cottage with the Lord, rather than in a mansion without Him. And we have seen some of the most godly of His dear saints who hold communion with Him living in some of the most humble conditions, because the Lord has provided some better thing for them.

“This is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.” They felt guilty upon that point. They did not stay there and take possession of all those good things, and say nothing about it. “We hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us.” They began to be urgent before, because of their condition, misery, and disease; and now they have entered into the land of plenty, and feel it is time to thank the Lord, feel that it is time to praise. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works” – not only to the children, but in the blessed Gospel, and to you who have a hope in His mercy!

“If we tarry to the morning light, some mischief will come upon us.” This is how the Lord works in their consciences. First of all, He brought them to such an extremity that they must move. It was no good to sit still; they must venture. And the Lord going before them, although they knew it not, as they ventured, so they found all their enemies had fled. Have you many fears that you may bring a reproach upon the name of Christ, and upon His cause? Are you afraid that, if you venture to honour Him in the ordinances of His house, you will never endure unto the end? Well, may the Lord enable you, not to honour your doubts and fears above His Word, for he says: “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 24,25)

O it brings us back to that one blessed Foundation! Do you need worthiness? You will only find it in Him. Do you need strength for the day? He has promised it: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25) Do you need wisdom? “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.” (James 1:5) Do you need teaching? “Who teacheth like Him?” (Job 36:22) Are you afraid you will fall? “He will keep the feet of His saints.” (1 Samuel 2:9)

“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this is a day of good tidings.” Yes, those of you who feel defenceless and pursued will find Him to be a refuge, a very present help in trouble. Those of you who feel the filth of sin and the corruption of nature, there is provision, a specialist. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened – a special fountain – “for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zechariah 13:1) Whatever you need you will find in Him, and we will repeat again that the Gospel comes to the opposite: the righteousness of the Lord Jesus never comes to the righteous. “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance. (Matthew 9:13) O the love of God in Christ! Immutable it is; many waters could never drown it. All His sufferings could not drown it. The ignominy, shame, and spitting, the crown of thorns, the curse that He endured, could not drown this love, and nothing can separate His people from it. So, poor sinner, "Look to Jesus, kind as strong – mercy joined with power." (780)

"They said one to another, We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." I know there is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence; but the Psalmist tells us why he spoke, and if you can speak for the same reason, you will be right. He said this: I believed, therefore have I spoken." (Psalm 116:10) And says Paul: "We also believe, and therefore speak." (2 Corinthians 4:13) If you believe, you may speak. It came to that point with the eunuch. He said: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." (Acts 8:36-37) Do you believe How are you going to know whether you are a believer? Well, there is a Scripture test: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." (1 Peter 2:7) Is Christ precious? If He is, you are a believer; and if you are a believer, Paul says it is a warrant to speak.

"This is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us." You remember that Abraham's servant, who was sent to find a bride for Isaac, when the Lord had led him to the right woman, her friends and relations said, "Let her tarry at least for ten days." O no! said the servant, as though he would say, "I have accomplished my mission, I have been led to the right woman." (Genesis ch.24) "If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." It just comes into our mind, there is a word similar to this in Joshua about the city of refuge: "And when he that doth flee unto one of these cities shall stand at the entering in of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them." (Joshua 20:4)

Well now, this is a very gracious way to be led and exercised in your soul, and therefore you for the main will find two things operating in your soul. There will be a driving urgency of need of salvation, and there will be a sweet drawing of the attractions of Christ in all His infinite sufficiency and suitability. May the Holy Spirit make application of this truth where He sees the case is suitable.

Amen.