

Sermon preached by Mr. F.L.Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Sunday morning, 23rd February 1964

"Whom ye therefore ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

Acts 17:23-27.

The Lord Himself declared in that sacred prayer in the 17th of John, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." If a knowledge of God is eternal life; ignorance of Him must be eternal death. How solemn it is to be ignorant of God! How solemn it is to know Him! Paul finished his course with this confession "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Well, these Athenians worshipped an unknown God and therefore, Paul in these verses, declared this great God unto them, and the substance of these verses is in this - "Him declare I unto you." O what a need there is today for a declaration of this great God! How ignorant men are of Him! And not only ignorant of Him by nature, but at enmity with Him, enemies through wicked works. How evident it is that both of our ecclesiastical dignitaries worship an unknown God. It is very obvious, very solemn. O how Paul, if he were here, could say unto our religious leaders, 'I see an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown God.' This inscription is upon all their utterances and upon all their publications. But what a mercy if we know God as revealed to us, as He was revealed to that poor woman. O that blessed 4th chapter of John. And the Lord reveals Himself exactly the same to all that know Him. How He gradually opened the understanding of that woman. He used no violence, but He gradually opened her understanding and by little and little manifested Himself to her. Gave her to know that He knew all about her and told her all things that ever she did. That He knew her life, her secrets, "I perceive that Thou art a prophet;" and this will be in the heart of all to whom He reveals Himself.

An amazing thing it is when Christ reveals Himself to a sinner by the Holy Spirit. She was convinced of sin first. 'Go, call thy husband.' She was made honest before Him; 'I have no husband.' Has the Lord ever told you all things that ever you did? Has the light of truth ever penetrated so that we understand, in a way that we did never understand before the opening verses of the 139th Psalm. 'Him declare I unto you.'

He commences the declaration of this great God by things that are seen, the creation. 'God that made the world and all things therein.' But our scholars today, who are wise above that which is written, consider that those majestic chapters, the first and second of Genesis, are a myth; does not

mean what it says; but Paul says, this is not innocent ignorance of God, "For the invisible things of Him, by the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead", so that they who are ignorant of Him, notwithstanding all His works that surround us, are without excuse.

'Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein.' It is His works that praise Him. It is a great experience when a favoured sinner can look at the works of God in creation and be enabled to say that these are the works of my Redeemer - not only the Creator, but my Redeemer.

There is much instruction in looking at the things of creation by faith. Faith sees everything in God's light. The works of God are all living. The works of men are all dead. If you consider it, even naturally, a blade of grass is a living thing. Nothing in all the inventions of men that is living; it is all dead. And sometimes that will send a thrill into your very soul as by faith you view the living works of God in His creation. I say, they are seen differently by faith from how they are viewed by nature, and this at times has been made a comfort to a troubled people.

I remember in 1929, 1 believe, in much trouble and adversity, looked across the fields and this Word was a comfort;

*With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer. (Gadsby's 132)*

'Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein seeing He is Lord of heaven and earth.' Not only is the Creator but he is the Lord, His divine sovereignty orders all things, penetrates all things all things are upheld by the word of His power. Why does the high tide stay at such a point every day? Some would say, 'Of course it does.' There is no 'of course' about it. It is because He is the Lord of heaven and earth. Why do we not become anxious in case the sun does not rise the next morning? 'Of course it will'- there is no 'of course' about it. 'Him declare I unto you' who is Lord of heaven and of earth, and faith rejoices. New every morning is the light and faith rejoices in it. O to know God! But to know Him in these things is one thing, to know Him in the Gospel is another; not another God. And where He is known in creation and in providence, it is not with another faith; but O to view Him in the realms of redemption and salvation.

'God that made the world and all things therein, seeing He is Lord of heaven and earth.' He said on one occasion "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" and that is very blessed because that speaks of His glorious exaltation and the benefits and effect of His finished work. They are prevalent in heaven. His intercession is based upon His finished work, and the same power He has upon earth by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His people.

'Seeing He is Lord in heaven and in earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands' -no place can contain Him. Infinity cannot be contained and therefore eternity is His dwelling place. Eternity alone is commensurate with infinity, and the infinite God in will be a comfort to a poor trembling sinner. 'Him declare I unto you.'

Do you feel a little drawing toward Him? Everything else but Him and His work will be shaken. Everything will be shaken. Kingdoms are shaken, the world today is shaking. O the convulsions the

wars, the tumults, the chaos! But this eternal God is unshakable. O what a firm foundation! Only so can a tempest-tossed troubled sinner be still and stand still and sit still. 'Him declare I unto you.' It is exactly the same thing as in Isaiah the 40th chapter; The prophet complained of the frailty of the human race. "The people is grass. The voice said cry, and he said, what shall I cry?" Paul said this, 'Him declare I unto you.' The Lord said to Isaiah, Say unto the people, these blades of grass, to the city of Judah, "Behold your God." O what a sight it is for frail withering blades of grass to behold the mighty infinite God in Christ in all His condescension, in His suitability; 'seeing He is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.' No building constitutes a temple of the Lord, mere bricks and mortar. As we read in the last chapter of Isaiah; "The heaven is My throne, the earth is my footstool, where is the house that ye would build unto Me, and where is a place of my rest? but unto this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit." The dwelling place of this great God is in the hearts of His poor people, and to have a people gathered together in whom the Holy Spirit dwells constitutes the temple of God. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost and ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"? He dwelleth not in temples made with hands I and He does not dwell in churches made with hands; not of men's doings, men's works. O how jealous this should make us that we should reject everything but the work of the Holy Ghost, for He dwells nowhere else!

'Neither is worshipped with men's hands' - that is, with the works of men, for salvation is not of works lest any man should boast. He is worshipped with the hands of faith. "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens." O the works of faith! The hands of faith are used in divine worship, but not the carnal works of men. 'Neither is worshipped with men's hands.' Toplady well knew that truth:

*Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling,
Naked come to Thee for dress,
Helpless look thee for grace,
Black, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me Saviour, or I die. (Gadsby's 143)*

That is to worship Him in spirit and in truth. 'Neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything.' Therefore, the inference is this, that we cannot bring Him anything with our hands. It is a very solemn word in the Proverbs, solemn to a minister; it has been to me. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom when he has no heart for it." Very solemn to have no heart, no inclination, no desire, and yet to attempt to bring a price in order to get wisdom. What a mercy it is to be emptied, to be brought to the end of our strength, our own wisdom and righteousness.

'Neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything.' It reminds us of the 50th Psalm, It says there, "I will take no bullock out of thy house nor he-goat out of thy folds." I do not need anything of yours, "for every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine and the fullness thereof." Well, what shall we bring then? 'Why, offer unto God thanksgiving, pay thy vows unto the Most High; call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me", that is worship; that is worship. 'Neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything.' O, how Paul does declare

this great God: He alone needs nothing. His Being is underived, "Eternal ages saw Him shine, He shines eternal ages hence." Strictly speaking, God had no need, no necessity to act outside of Himself, no necessity to have created at all. He could know no necessity, what He did was according to His sovereign will; and the purpose was that He should create a people for Himself, that they might show forth His praise. O the mystery of it! That He should form and create a people capable of receiving a revelation of Himself; a people capable of such a transformation as to be brought into union with Himself and into an eternal relationship; a people whom He would receive unto Himself that they might behold His glory. This was the object of all creation. O blessed people! Time is short, and what is to be compared with the Spirit's witness in our hearts that we are born of God, that we are His people? '

'Neither is-worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything.' There is something in that observation that is very blessed, declaring the great God who needs nothing, He contains all things in Himself, and yet needy sinners come to Him and receive out of His fullness. Not only every supply for this life, but all supplies that make up salvation, revealed and provided for in the glorious Gospel. 'Him declare I unto you.'

'As though He needed anything; seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things;' that is, speaking naturally and also spiritually. All life is from God, every kind of life, vegetable life, human life, animal life, spiritual life. Life is impossible but from God Himself and this puts things in their right places. It should put men in their right places. I know that science has brought about many inventions, very many, some of them diabolical inventions; but it is all a poor affair when compared with creation. Solomon asks in the Ecclesiastes, "Is there anything whereof it can be said, behold this is new?" There is nothing. Yet one might say look at the development of electricity and its power and use - it is not new. The Lord has permitted men to discover what He had already created, and harness it. Wonderful achievement of aeroplanes, that they should rise with all the tons weight. It is not new. Who made the density of the atmosphere, the laws of natures which maintain the flight of those aeroplanes? It is not new. The pillars of the earth are the Lord's and the pillars of the earth are the laws of nature, they are God's laws. He permitted men to seek them out and to harness those potential powers that were in His creation. There is nothing new.

*Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we! (Gadsby's 1)*

O to know Him! 'Him declare I unto you. Seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things.' Life is beautiful. You can watch it in the flowers, in the vegetation of the earth, it provides for the whole universe. Animal life is wonderful. Good Watts expresses it in a beautiful way, of things "immensely great, immensely small." But the life of God in the soul, O what a life is this! 'All life and breath.' He is speaking here more particularly of human life. When God breathed into Adam he became a living soul. That life was not spiritual life, it was immortality. He breathed immortality into Adam's soul. But when the Holy Ghost breathes regeneration into the heart of a sinner, that is eternal, divine, spiritual life. 'Life and breath and all things.' He gives all things. We are dependent creatures. If we felt it, it would be good for us; and we are not only dependent but all men are debtors. O what a noble grace is the grace of humility! You see some men strutting about the earth in all their pride. If they were to realise what is later in this chapter, 'in Him we live and move and have our being, and

that He gives life and breath and all things', they would not think so much of themselves. I believe that if you are brought to know God by His revealing Himself to you, you will also know yourself as you are before Him. What an influence this would have in our lives, Why, my friends, I believe that it would be a wholesome, salutary influence in every duty and relationship of life, it would indeed. Ignorance of God and rebelliousness against Him is the secret of the condition of this poor crazy world. We cannot express the blessedness of a true knowledge of God because those who know Him, as that woman knew Him, by His own manifestation, they are partakers of Him. She partook of Him. O what an effect it had. She left her water pots. What a great thing it would be if there was that manifest evidence of a knowledge of God to cause us to leave our water pots and to distinguish between the riches and preferments and honours and pleasures of this poor world, and the glory of God's grace and the Person of that grace. She prayed that she might partake of that living water and the Lord Jesus showed her that it needed a knowledge of Him. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked.'" Poor woman, you don't know *Who* is speaking to you; if you knew you would pray. If you knew *Who* He is and felt your need of Him, you would pray, "and He would have given thee living water." 'Him declare T. unto you.'

'God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything; seeing He giveth to all, life and breath and all things.' If these few words are opened to us, it will help us to pray, it will help a poor empty sinner to come to a full God. It will help an ignorant sinner to seek wisdom. It will help a poor poverty stricken bankrupt to come unto Christ, His unsearchable riches.

'And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.' There is no colour bar here. A black man has human blood and the Lord declares here by Paul, 'Hath made of one blood,' that is human blood, 'all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.' That should teach us what Paul writes to the Colossians: "Where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but God is all and in all." What a declaration of Him that is! He is all. In a gracious way He is all His people's righteousness, all their strength, all their wisdom, all their sanctification, all that they need for redemption. All in all! All that He is, He is in all His people; there is no distinction.

'And hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed.' All times, every dispensation. Nothing can take God by surprise, and O what different dispensations have passed over the world! You take from Genesis throughout, before the flood, what a terrible condition the world was in! But the Lord knows from the beginning to the end. His works are known from the beginning of the world; and this is no small comfort and consolation to His people who may feel that they are brought into a place where their way is hid from the Lord and their judgement is passed over from their God.

He asked them in that wonderful 40th of Isaiah which speaks of His sovereignty, His power and the Lord asked them why they said it. "Why sayest thou O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, thy way is hid from the Lord, my judgement is passed over from my God?" Why do you say that? And then He brings it to the text really; "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of His understanding, He

giveth power to the faint and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength." 'Him declare I unto you.' O what a declaration, what a mighty God! O blessed people that know Him!

'And hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation,' and this is a mercy, especially when we are in the dark.

*Whene'er I make some sudden stop -
And many such I make -
And cannot see the cloud cleared up,
Nor know which way to take; (Gadsby's 812)*

To realise that He hath determined the times before appointed for us individually. David said in his trouble, "I said, Thou art my God, in Thee is my trust, my times are in Thy hands."

You look at this, those of you who may be perplexed, Him - this great God, hath determined the times before appointed for you and the bounds of your habitation. O this is a comfort! It was a comfort to troubled Job: "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him."

Well, may the Lord, use the declaration of this blessed God, that His troubled people may come to Him and prove what lie declares, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for Me?"

Amen.