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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning, 18th April 1965.

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:32-33.

The incarnation and blessed sin-atonement death, the glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven of God's eternal Son, are the foundations of salvation, the foundation of the church, the foundation of faith and hope. These doctrines are spoken of in the Ephesians as "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." (ch.2:20) And it is these foundations of which the Psalmist speaks, where he says: "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3) They must then be of vital importance, and we do need the Holy Spirit to lead us into these profound and rich truths. I know there are some who feel that they are too abstract, too difficult for them to follow; they want something easier, that does not need so much exercise. But whatever degree, whatever attainment we may have in our experience, if it is a right work of the Holy Ghost, it will proceed from these blessed doctrines.

We have then here, and in the chapter, the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Last Friday we were trying to consider the blessed sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The contrast of His exalted condition after His resurrection, to a poor suffering man is very sacred and very blessed. You remember we attempted to speak of His vicarious sufferings, His ignominy and His death, and that it was all for that unspeakably awful thing, sin; that it sets before us the infinite, immutable, eternal love of the Trinity; the love of God the Father in election, the love of the Son in redemption, the love of the Holy Ghost in quickening sinners into life; and the first effect of the resurrection of Christ is quickening.

There is a blessed intimate connexion made in 2nd chapter of the Ephesians, as you know: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." But you will notice how that that chapter follows on a declaration of the greatness of God's power "to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." It brings us to recognise at once the vital importance of union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The first effect, then, of the power of Christ's resurrection in salvation, is quickening a dead sinner into life. "This Jesus."

In the 36th verse He sums the matter up: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." There is something very blessed about that expression: "that same Jesus" – the same, yesterday, today and for ever – and that is the foundation of our hope. That same Jesus that went about doing good, manifesting, demonstrating His Deity through His humanity by His miracles, in opening the eyes of the blind, in raising the dead – and that intends more particularly the dead in sin – cleansing the lepers, casting out devils. He did nothing but good. Guile was never found on His sacred lips. And yet, O how He was led as a lamb to the slaughter! "He opened not His mouth." He did not resist His enemies, but He did resist to blood. He did not fail, He was not discouraged. "This same Jesus" – same Jesus who appeared so helpless to those wretched men; they knew Him not; they beheld not His glory. "This

same Jesus" – whom they wounded with thorns, put on a purple robe in mockery. "This same Jesus" – who hung, to the natural eye, helpless; who hung there upon the cross as though He was vanquished. "This same Jesus." "This Jesus hath God raised up." But it is union with Him that will make it saving in our experience. Beautifully, simply, it is described in the hymn:

One in the tomb; one when He rose;
One when He triumphed o'er His foes;
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat.

(Gadsby's 405)

And I repeat what we so often, but not too often, say that, if we are rightly exercised in our hearts in reading the Scriptures, there will always be an enquiry as to whether we have an interest in this Saviour and this great salvation. "This Jesus." There will never be another Jesus. You will be thankful, thankful for a Godhead; thankful that in Him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, thankful that He condescended to take human nature into union with His divine Person. And therefore, everything that He did has the stamp of immutability and eternity upon it. It is this that makes Him precious.

"This Jesus hath God raised up." We said at the opening that the incarnation and death and resurrection of Christ are intimately connected. It was the eternal Son of God that took human nature into union with His Person. But He did not become the Son of God when He became incarnate; it would affect His resurrection. O some of you will feel this nourish your faith! If He had been made the Son of God when He became incarnate, as many hold that terrible error, He would have had a beginning. If He had a beginning He would have had an ending, and of what use would He have been to a poor sinner? Do you feel it in your experience, that you need this same Jesus as He speaks of His eternity in the blessed 8th Proverbs?

"This Jesus hath God raised up." He died a voluntary death; He could die no other death. If He had died of necessity, He would have been a sinner. He knew no sin, because of His blessed virgin birth. His humanity was completely sinless, as was His life, but He died a voluntary death. "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" – a commandment to die. (John 10:18) "This Jesus" – the Mediator, a Substitute. A Substitute in everything that He became. All His work was vicarious. "This Jesus." O you will feel in your hearts that there is none other. There will be a peculiar knowledge of Him, although a poor sinner may feel that he knows but little of Him; but you know this much, it must be "this same Jesus." It is a mercy to know that much about Him; and when you read of His sufferings and of His blessed, precious, voluntary death, that He became obedient – not obedient only in everything He did, not only obedient to the demands of the law – but obedient unto death. And when you see Him made sin that His people might be made righteous; when you hear His divine voice of love and mercy: "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O My God," when you view Him, as we mentioned on Friday: "He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" – it is that Jesus that you need and desire.

"This Jesus hath God raised up." "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain...Ye are yet in your sins." (1 Corinthians 14:15-17) It means this, that if the Lord Jesus was

not raised up (I would say it reverently) He would have been an impostor, and the whole of the Word of God would have been a cunningly devised fable. O but with what majesty Paul to the Corinthians says: "But now is Christ raised from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (v.20) He is the firstfruits, He represents the whole harvest. As the firstfruits, under the law, were waved before the altar as representing the whole harvest that was to follow, so the Lord Jesus was the firstfruits. He, the glorious forerunner, who has entered, not into holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, and there to appear before God for us. O the blessedness of the Person of Christ in His blessed birth, His sin-atonement death, His glorious resurrection! "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:25) We said on Friday that those pronouns are of great importance, and if you are really exercised you will take notice of them; indeed, they will take notice of you. Was He delivered for **my** offences? Did He rise again for **my** justification?

"This Jesus hath God raised up." The work of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was not an act of naked omnipotence. It is true to say that nothing in the work of salvation was an act of naked omnipotence. Omnipotence was in it because the fulness of the Godhead was in Christ, but there was not a sheer act of omnipotence in anything. It was a work, and it is a work in the soul. Salvation is an experience. It is an experience of the Lord Jesus. He experienced obedience by the things that He suffered. "This Jesus hath God raised up." He brought life, and immortality to light. This is the Gospel. Justice demanded His death; Justice demanded His resurrection. There is a beauty there, if you have union with Him. O "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Timothy 2:11-12) And our resurrection and our salvation will be upon the exact same grounds as the Lord Jesus, the Substitute. I say it was not an act, a sheer act of omnipotence. The great reason why the Lord could not be holden of death was because He had satisfied divine justice in His sufferings, in His life, in His death. He had magnified the law. It is a wonderful word, that. I think we said on Friday that the law magnified and scrutinised Him. The law demanded perfection, perfection in a sinless humanity, perfection in everything in His life, perfection to the very end, perfection in His death; and the Lord Jesus rendered that perfection. Therefore, He could not be holden of death. I say it was justice that demanded His death, it was justice that demanded His resurrection. He rose again from the grave because He had honoured and vindicated the glory of God in His divine justice. "Hell was vanquished, Heaven appeared; God was satisfied and pleased."

"This Jesus." We see Him in the judgement hall. His judgement was taken away from Him. He made no defence of Himself. They took Him; He presented His sacred body a living sacrifice for His dear people. But it is "this same Jesus" now.

With cries and tears He offered up His humble suit below;
But with Authority He asks, enthroned in glory NOW.

(Gadsby's 117)

Does it help us? Has it any connexion with your experience as a poor sinner? "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." (Psalm 68:18)

"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." But the important thing is in our own souls, as to whether we have any evidence of the power of His resurrection, whether we have been quickened by His Spirit. It is a wonderful thing, my friends, that the whole of the glorious Gospel, a holy Gospel, everything in it being holy, should come for this one purpose – to destroy the works of the devil, to make an end of sin. And the Lord Jesus, when He rose, He got the victory over death, the grave, over hell. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation 1:18) O if a poor sinner sees that victorious Lord, now appearing in heaven for us, our great High Priest, our Mediator, our Advocate above, to see Him with the keys of death and of hell, O what strength and consolation there is to flee unto the hope set before them in the Gospel!

"This Jesus bath God raised up." God raised Him up. He raised Himself from the dead; and the Holy Spirit takes of the effects, the benefits of Christ's resurrection, partakes of the benefits of His death, His precious blood, all its virtue. O He seals the covenant of grace by His death, His precious blood. But by His resurrection He opened, opened the covenant of grace, and all the blessings that it contains. That covenant would never have become effective, His people would never have received the benefits of the covenant, the decrees and purposes of God in eternity would have been frustrated, if He had never risen again. O to have this opened in our experience, and become our salvation! "This Jesus hath God raised up." That wonderful word in the 2nd Ephesians seems almost too good to hardly believe possible, except that it is in the Word of God: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (v.4-6) And each in their measure will know this power of Christ's resurrection, when you are raised, raised from death in sin, to a newness of life in Christ Jesus. "That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24) O it is a serious point, my friends, when we consider these blessed truths, as to whether we have any evidence of the experience of them! Have you by the resurrection of Christ been raised to a newness of life? The Holy Ghost takes of Christ's resurrection when He quickens a soul into life; when one is born again, it is the direct effect of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Salvation is a great thing. O what a contrast there is between vital religion and a mere religiosity and false religion!

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." They were witnesses; the Lord Jesus appeared unto His disciples and apostles; He appeared unto them, and with many infallible proofs showed them that He was that same Jesus, showed to them His hands and His feet. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." And really, that involved all of His witnesses. You read of them in the Prophets. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord...that I am He." (Isaiah 43:10) Are you, have you in your heart the witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? What will be a testimony to you that you are a partaker of Christ's life? For He said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Why, if you partake of Christ's life by the Holy Spirit, there will be the living graces of the Spirit in your heart. You will have a living faith, and therefore it will be made manifest in prayer. O what a sweet evidence of the power of Christ's resurrection is a poor sinner brought to pray! As we were lately saying: "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee." (Psalm 65:4) The real cause of that is because it is according as we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and the union is such that "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." (John 6:37) They shall come to

Me, they shall pray. You will feel the life of God and faith in your heart, so that all things will be used to cause you to approach unto Him, be brought to feel that deep need of Him, that you must either possess Him or perish. And if this life of Christ is in your heart, that life will be attracted by Christ Himself, for it is the same life; and the life of Christ will attract none other life but His, like a magnet.

What a mercy if there is a real vital and spiritual attraction by union with the Lord Jesus Christ, so that there is a constant going unto Him! "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord." (Psalm 25:15) There will be that evidence of the resurrection of Christ, both from your first conversion, your first quickening, and every act of faith Godward, and every reviving, all intimately connected with Christ's resurrection, "whereof we are all witnesses."

O it is a blessed thing to have the witness in ourselves! "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" – he knows he believes. (1 John 5:10) Some of you may know you believe before you can believe that Christ is yours, but you know you believe in Him when you read of His blessed sufferings and death, which we tried to trace out on Friday. And then this same Jesus, in His victory, you will feel in your very heart. You know you believe in Him, and you want Him – none else can do you good.

"We are all witnesses". They were all witnesses of His bodily presence, but His people are witnesses by the Holy Spirit and their faith. It is a point worth considering. He that believeth in this blessed Man "this same Jesus," hath the witness in himself. Have you? Have you a witness in yourself that you believe in the Lord Jesus? everything is there. The Lord Jesus said to the poor blind man, whom He cured, and the Pharisees cast him out of the Temple, the Lord found him, and it is that vital question that he asked, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God? Who is He, Lord, that I might believe He it is that speaketh unto thee. Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him." And your believing produces worship, and if your worship is only that in casting your care upon Him with that dear woman who came and worshipped Him saying, "Lord, help me." She had a witness, it was the witness of Christ's resurrection. All vital godliness, every prayer, every spiritual aspiration, any love you feel in your heart to Him, every touch that you receive, every blessed word you have from the Scriptures, every kiss of His lips, all, all is the consequence of His glorious resurrection - and O how it does give the answer to that important question to the Corinthians, "O death, where is thy sting?" Sinner, it will break your heart if you see your sin and its sting, stinging the Lord Jesus upon Calvary. O He was stung by sin, and the curse of God was in His bones like fire "O death where is thy sting?" The Lord extracts that sting upon Calvary. "O grave where is thy victory?" Why, they thought that they had got rid of the Lord Jesus when they crucified Him, but He could not be holden of death, He got the victory over the grave, and His people are given that victory. "Thanks be unto God for He giveth us the, victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted." He is exalted now." He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins". He appears before God for His people, He is their representative in heaven. He answers their questions, and by His own intercessory work, His blessed merit, He entered into heaven itself and prepared a place for them. The resurrection of Christ. O my friends, have we by grace an interest in it? I believe some of our hymn writers felt the sacredness of the truth. Speaking of this kingdom of grace and of glory, sometimes sing; "Reveal, confirm, my interest there."

"Therefore, being by the hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" and that is the same as in the 68th Psalm: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive." O the captive exile hastened to be loosed; and when one sees captivity led captive by the Lord Jesus ascending on high, having received gifts one of the greatest gifts He received for men is the gift of the Holy Ghost; and in the 4th Ephesians you will see also that the great gift of the gospel ministry is from a risen exalted Head of the church, and therefore the church itself has its being from an ascended Saviour. And these gifts that He received for men are the gifts in the church, and all the provision that is made there is the provision that Christ has in Himself, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Thus the day of Pentecost, and when and if it should please God in a certain year that there would be another day of Pentecost, we should have the same effect of Christ's resurrection. If it was in the purposes of God that there should be 3,000 souls added to the church in one day, it would be brought to pass. We look at diminishing churches, and sometimes our view of them is a view of unbelief. We say false things in unbelief, we say things are coming to nothing; it is all wrong. It is right what we sing –

*What! has the Holy Ghost forgot
To quicken souls whom Christ has bought,
And let them lifeless lie?
No, Thou almighty Paraclete,
Thou shedd'st thy heavenly influence yet,
Thou visit'st sinners still. (Gadsby's 715)*

The Holy Ghost still quickens sinners; and He will. And if the Lord according to His eternal will and purpose designs that in a certain period there shall be 3,000 babies born whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, those 3,000 will come unto Him. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come." Therefore my friends, we should look to the Lord when we fear things are coming to an end, we should remember "this same Jesus! The same now as on the day of Pentecost. "Look to Jesus." If we look anywhere else we shall be defeated.

O may the Lord grant us faith that we may witness of this truth, and have the witness in our heart of believing in Him and be made witnesses for Him while we live, and be found in Him when we die.

Amen.