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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel
Brighton, Sunday morning, 10th April 1966

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places".

Ephesians 1. v.19 & 20.

On Friday we were considering the blessed death of the Lord Jesus, today we have before us His glorious resurrection. There must be a death before there can be a resurrection and therefore, it does set before us the fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith and of salvation. Who can express the importance of them? But O to know them! The apostle prayed, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection"; and if we are rightly exercised nothing less than that will satisfy us.

The Apostle in this chapter prays for these Ephesians particularly to know: He says, "Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you and to make mention of you in my prayers", and the particular mention was, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him". A particular kind of knowledge, what he calls to the Philippians an excellent knowledge, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". There is an excellent knowledge of Him and there is a nominal knowledge about Him. "The Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ". We cannot know Him without this Spirit of wisdom and revelation. All true vital godliness is a revelation. The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, he might be highly educated and that is good when it is applied to natural things, but not the most advanced science or education can begin to penetrate the spiritual; and that is just a point that is not understood in these modern times, therefore, however long we may have known about the Gospel, however many sermons we may have heard, and I might say however many sermons we may have preached, if our knowledge is not in the wisdom and revelation of the Spirit, we are ignorant of the things we profess and we are destitute of them, and that was the anxiety of the Apostle with respect to the Church.

Then he goes on to show what he means by a Spirit of wisdom and revelation: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" and that is with the light of the living. He shows this writing to the Corinthians, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give unto us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," or Person of Jesus Christ, and that is the only light that will reveal Him. No light of human intelligence will reveal Him. It is good for the Spirit to impress this upon us. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened". A good thing if it should provoke in us a prayer: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles, then will I go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy". O to be thus led and illuminated! It will make Christ first, it gives the secret of those pilgrims, Paul said to them, "Bring to remembrance the former things, when after ye were illuminated" - this is the illumination of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation - "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened", and what a blessed prospect is set before those opened, illuminated eyes and understanding! Then it is, those things are seen which the eye does not see and those things are heard that the natural ear never hears. Then those things enter right into the heart that have never entered into the heart of a natural man; very blessed. Paul prays that these Ephesians might have such a knowledge as this. But he goes further, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of

His calling", that ye may KNOW it, that is, with these open eyes, with this true light shining, with this wisdom and revelation, ye might know the end of the faith to what ye are called, who are called to His eternal kingdom and glory; he prayed that they might know it. Paul never knew it perfectly here; he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward it". But he did desire to apprehend that for which he also was apprehended of Jesus Christ. He knew he was apprehended of Him; he knew that grace had laid hold of his heart, but what he wanted to know was more fully, as though he would say, 'I am apprehended, those things that were gain unto me as a Pharisee, now I count loss, I was alive once without the law', but he longed to lay hold of that which had laid hold of him.

"That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"; for by the Spirit, in all humility we are led into these riches, these green pastures: it will make this world look a poor affair, a poor, shabby, dusty, dead place. Has the Gospel and the things of God ever had that effect in you? This is what will enable us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If this prospect and this good hope is set before us. The pilgrims were able to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, they knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance, and "He that believeth hath the witness in himself", and that is the place to have a witness, not to rest upon the verdict and upon the opinion of other people, but to have the witness of the Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Well, to my mind, that is in the Apostle's prayer; and then he comes to regeneration, conversion: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward, who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ". Well, in the first place, there is here that blessed doctrine and truth of Christ's resurrection and the effects of it. I consider the 15th Corinthians that we read is a most blessed definition of the resurrection of Christ and of His people in Him. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen and if Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain". O the importance of this blessed, strong language! we would not speak a word irreverently, but it means this, if Christ did not rise from the dead, He was a usurper, not what He declared Himself to be, for to the Romans Paul says that Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.

O, how important was the resurrection to the Lord Jesus Himself, otherwise the Scriptures could never have been fulfilled. He was justified in the Spirit when He rose from the dead. It declared several important things. One thing was this, it declared Him to be the Son of God with power. There is a beautiful harmony and connexion throughout the whole of the Person and work, death and resurrection of Christ, and that harmony is but the truth of His eternal Person. We touched upon this last Friday you will remember, and I do not want to repeat what we then said, although you cannot separate the death of Christ from His resurrection. All the beauty, and glory, and benefits, and validity of His finished work derives not only from the perfection of the work accomplished, but derived from His Person, that was the point and all would have been marred and spotted if it were not for His virgin birth, but this has an affect upon His death and upon His resurrection. When He rose from the tomb it declared, confirmed, the truth concerning His Person, the truth concerning His sinless humanity, that human nature in which He suffered, bled and died, that human nature in which He fulfilled the law of God and rendered absolute perfection. That holy human nature which was, as we said, a substitute for His people in everything concerning that nature and all that that nature accomplished, and His resurrection confirmed this. So that the Scriptures know, recognise, two men really, Adam and Christ.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive". Adam is the federal head of the human race, but the election of grace were transferred from Adam, called out from that vine unto the true vine and engrafted into Christ, therefore, Christ is the Head of the Church, the Head of grace and therefore, as all those that are in Adam die, even so, all that are in Christ shall be made alive; and there is something very blessed about that expression 'even so' "For as in Adam all die EVEN SO, all that are in Christ shall be made alive". That has a connexion with the resurrection of Christ, for as sin has reigned unto death universally in the very being, even to the Lord's people, the universality of sin impregnated every fibre of our being, it is a truth and it is an experience, and it will reign unto death; sin will dig our graves, but blessed be God, it ends there,

"Death which puts and end to life
Will put an end to sin".

"But as sin has reigned unto death, even so.." very blessed it is, a kind of a hyphen that joins the two together, "even so, shall grace reign" as universally in the being and it will reign and abound over sin, "For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound". Even so, shall grace reign, through righteousness, and it will reign right through the grave because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; it will reign through righteousness, unto eternal life. The Apostle here prayed that these Ephesians might know it.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe ?" There was a great power in creation. Paul speaks of that to the Romans, "For the invincible things of Him in the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead", His omnipotence. But can there be anything greater than omnipotence ? Impossible, otherwise it would not be omnipotence, then how can there be a power, exceeding greatness of His power, which exceeded the power exercised in the creation ? The creation of the world was an act of naked omnipotence. There was no mercy, no grace, no love in creation. You can search the Scriptures and you will not find anywhere it is said the Lord loved creation; you will see upon every days work that He beheld and it was very good, it was perfect, but He never loved it, and He did not rest in it. He rested from it. He rested from His works but He never rested in them. But now look at the work of redemption. What was the exceeding greatness of His power ? The exceeding greatness of it is that it was exercised through a different channel and it effected a different purpose. It was to a different end, it brought in all the divine perfections and attributes of Jehovah. The omnipotence of God in salvation had to deal with the justice, righteousness, holiness and glory of God, and, therefore, there was omnipotence exercised through a Mediator, and it was the exercise of sovereign, immutable love, the exercise of divine and sovereign grace. You think of it, and Paul prayed that these Ephesians might know it, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye might know it". This is the hope of your calling, only so will you know the riches of and enter into the inheritance of the saints in light. If the Lord Jesus had never risen from the dead, everything would have been shut up, the covenant of grace and all its benefits would never have become effective, the beneficiaries would never have received any benefit from the covenant of grace, there would have been no mercies, spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, because He would not have been who He professed to be. Now this is in experience, when one is called by grace. There is a greater power when the Holy Ghost effectually calls and quickens into life a dead sinner, it is a power that exceeds the power that created the world.

O what a great thing true religion is ! ah, and sinners need it. What less power could bring a dead sinner to life ? What less power could bring one grovelling in the things of the world, in all its beggarly elements, and pleased with it, What less power could translate a poor sinner from such a kingdom of sin and Satan and

darkness, into the kingdom of God's marvellous light ? Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know it, and we might well ask ourselves as we sit under the Gospel, as to what kind of a knowledge we have of these things ? You can have an intellectual knowledge of them and be able to set them out in detail and correctly and be lost with it all.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe". A mercy to be a believer. This believing is coming. The Lord Jesus expressed a blessed truth when He said, "All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me, and he that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out, for this is the will of Him that sent Me, that whosoever seeth the Son"...you must have eyes and you must have light, "Whosoever seeth the Son," seeth Him in such a way by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation as to believe in Him, "Shall not perish, but I will raise him up again at the last day". "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe ?". There is a blessedness in that word usward, it is not only an exceeding great power, but the direction of it is usward. You take it again with respect to the Gospel, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, it is the power of God"...in a certain direction, "It is the power of God unto salvation." It is this mighty power of the everlasting love of God flowing through the Redeemer, "And He being rich", rich because He is God, rich because the fulness of the Godhead is in Him, "Yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich". The love of God flowing through that blessed channel conveyed the divine power by the Holy Ghost to a sinners heart, and that makes a believer.

"The greatness of His power to usward, according to His mighty power", I don't see any sign of free-will, arminianism. Why my friends, there seems to me today by the different pamphlets and circulars that I receive from over the country and from America, one would think that there is a reviving, but it is all bodily exercise; there is nothing of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in it at all. O what a mercy if the Lord has manifested Himself to us ! "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent", and what is the exceeding greatness of His power ? Now is not this just what some of you need ? It is a good thing when the Holy Spirit awakes your sense of sinnership and need to the fulness, the grace, that is in Christ Jesus.

Who needs the exceeding greatness of this power of God in Christ ? not little sinners. Those who know the power of the devil, the power of Satan, those who know the power of their depraved degenerate nature, those who know what sore temptation is, those who know what the world is and that they have the world in their heart. I wonder if there is a sinner here that really feels that nothing less than the exceeding greatness of His power can ever overcome such a heart, can ever de-throne such a devil, can ever rescue one so sunk, so lost, so vile ? It suits me, this very language, "What is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe ?" Who believe, and this is not the work of nature. To believe is to be possessed of faith which is the gift of God. To believe is to believe that God is; to believe is to believe what we are ourselves, and to know it. To believe is to come, to come to the Lord Jesus. To believe is to receive Him. You may not receive Him as to possess Him, but you receive Him under a sense of His all-sufficiency and would say with Peter, "To Whom else can we go?" To receive Him in a way of choosing Him. O sinners do choose Him - and if you do then the hymn we sing is true,

"Had not Thy choice prevented mine,
I ne'er had chosen Thee".

But I believe there are many poor trembling sinners who receive the Lord Jesus in their desires and need of Him long before they receive Him in the full assurance of faith. But this exceeding great power will overcome every other power; it will overcome the power of unbelief. I really feel that that is the strongest enemy in my nature, the power

of unbelief and carnal reason, and we need the exceeding greatness of the power of God's grace to overcome, overcome every external and internal and infernal enemy of the soul; but He is great enough, He is great enough; and when you look at yourself, when you look at your nature, when you look at your life, when you look at the world, a hostile wilderness, O how attractive is this expression! "The exceeding greatness of His power". It brings us to that expression to which we often refer, refer to it because I believe it was once made a consolation: "How much more", three words, the exceeding greatness of His power is "How much more" than every other power, His name is above every name, and so when the blessed Spirit does give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, then you can look at everything else and dreadful things, and I don't think you will find anything more dreadful to look at than yourself and your depraved wicked heart and its deceitfulness; but look where you will, when this blessed Spirit reveals this power, this blessed Redeemer and Saviour, there will be an answer to what you see. "How much more". "The exceeding greatness of His power to usward," exercised to usward, "Who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ".

I do feel to need the Holy Ghost to preserve me as we are involved in these most solemn things; but if ever we are saved, if ever we go to heaven, we must know the power of Christ's death and the power of His resurrection, and we shall be brought, each in our measure, unto conformity with Him, His death and His sufferings. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation..." "For if we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him, if we suffer we shall also reign with Him, if we deny Him, He also will deny us".

So that there is the practical part of religion and if we are rightly built upon this foundation, if we are rooted and grounded in Christ, there will be a fruit in our lives, conduct, deportment. O how solemn, how sad it is for one's life to contradict one's profession!

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe". Do you believe? On Friday we were trying to speak of the death of Christ, and of His resurrection today, Do you believe it? You see how it is joined together. Paul writing to the Thessalonians says, "If we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so", there is another even so, "Even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him". You see the connexion, the union, Do you believe it? Not because the Bible says so, it is a great thing to believe the Bible, but we shall need to believe it twice. It is a good thing to believe the truth as it is declared in the Bible, but if you believe to the saving of your soul you will believe the same truth again from your own experience.

"What is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward?" O that we may have an assurance of faith so as to be able to say, 'the exceeding greatness of His power to me-ward', because that is what we must have. We must die alone, and I do believe that it is a salutary exercise to bring our latter end to view. It is good to meet together, I believe I can say,

"I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,"

We don't want to be in too much of a hurry to say "Though vilest of them all", we need to be sincere, but soon we must be gathered out from public worship and must die alone. O but that union with Christ! "The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead". It was a mighty power and yet justice, justice was in it. Had the Lord Jesus Christ never

been raised from the dead, it would have been an injustice. Even the law of God that required His blessed death, that law required His resurrection, and it was satisfied, it was honoured. He went to the end of the law for righteousness, therefore He must rise again. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell nor suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption".

The Lord Jesus, He experienced hell, not figuratively, actually in the place, the sacred soul of the Lord Jesus never entered into hell as a place, but His sacred soul suffered hell under the curse of God, under the solemnwrath of God against sin. "But Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell", and what is said of Him belongs to His people because of their union with Him. It is true of all His people, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell!" "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption". Our bodies will see corruption; how are we to make out that union? "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself".

I believe this is the Gospel, and this is how the Holy Ghost sanctifies His people and makes them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Amen .

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).