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Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
Wednesday evening 13th July 1960

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. Exodus 15:11-3

The deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt is the greatest wonder recorded in the Old Testament, and it is celebrated throughout the whole Word of God. Indeed, the Lord Himself in the 81st Psalm makes it the ground for asking the greatest things that we can possibly need: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." That was the greatest thing, therefore you cannot ask for anything greater: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. 81:10). And the Israelites are a typical people, and this history is manifesting, demonstrating, divine sovereignty; yet it is not written for history's sake, and some of you, who are exercised in your soul before God, want something different from mere history.

This is a song of deliverance, a song of Moses and his faith, as we sometimes sing:

*"When faith is lifted up the highest,
She sings of none but Him."*

(J Stevens; Gadsby's 228)

"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?" The margin says "among the mighty ones." Micah makes the same gracious exclamation. "Who is like unto Thee O Lord" – not merely that brought the people out of Egypt; not 'Who is like unto Thee who created the world and everything in it,' but "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity" (ch. 7:18) – the work of redemption, the greatest work of all.

But here there is to be seen, throughout this chapter and then through the whole of the Scriptures, this great God and His people, and this same Moses exclaims the same concerning his people: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" (Deut. 33 v. 29) Very blessed! But the point is, are we one of them? And this God and His people you will distinguish through the Word of God, and also observe as we go here and there. And then again this God and His people are spoken of in the Psalms and in the prophecy of Isaiah. We read there "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise" (ch. 43:21). They declared "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death" (Ps. 48:14). Who can express the blessedness of having some indubitable evidence by the Spirit of being one of the people of God?

'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty ones?' This has a kind of challenge in it. The "mighty ones" would include Pharaoh and all the mighty potentates of this world. The greatest creature in this world is man, but you take the greatest man among men, and still he is but a "man, whose breath is in his nostrils" (Is. 2:22). I have found it to be a very sacred rest, and to give confidence to faith, when one has been enabled to view this great God and understand from experience what we sing:

*"Had I a glance of Thee, my God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon;
Vanish as though I saw them not,
As a dim candle dies at noon."*

(J Watts; Gadsby's 480)

And in my little experience I have proved this, that poor sinful insignificant worms of the earth can have such a knowledge of God in Christ as to realise that there is a connection between what He is and what He has condescended to be made to poor sinners in His dear Son; that they are directly connected with the eternal purposes of God; and that is a tremendous experience - poor trembling sinners, brought to feel what they are, the universal death and destitution and wreckage, yet to have that faith whereby they view in God in Christ an eternal refuge and an infinite supply, a fulness that can afford them every needful thing for time and for eternity.

'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?' So this sets before us the infinite Being of God. Very solemn; very blessed. To know Him is very solemn. To be ignorant of Him is terrible. Do we know Him? When Paul went to Athens he saw an inscription "To the unknown god" (Acts 17:23). Very solemn it is to worship an unknown God, terrible in the extreme to talk about a God of whom we have no knowledge. These things bring us to points in our own experience - do we know Him? The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also" (John 8:19; 14:7). He said "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God" (John 14:1). That was spoken to me once in great distress and conflict, and then I knew that I believed in God. 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?' It is His divine sovereignty which orders and controls everything and every person and every event, which disposes of every lot. 'Who is like unto Thee?' Omnipotent He is, and therefore stands alone. And He declares Himself for the comfort of His people: "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," upon this ground, that "I am God and there is none else" (Is. 45:22). The whole of that majestic chapter, the 45th of Isaiah, is occupied with a declaration of this omnipotent, eternal and infinite God.

But He is only knowable in the Person of His dear Son, *out* of whom He "is a consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24), *in* whom He is a Refuge and Saviour. 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness?' Isaiah had a view of this: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Is. 6:3). He had a sight of the King, the Lord of hosts. Strictly speaking, God has no attributes; He hasn't holiness, really; He *is* holy essentially. And we read in one of the Psalms "rejoice ... and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Ps. 97 v. 12). But oh, the remembrance of His holiness, when we are first under a sense of pollution and sin and corruption, is very solemn; but to see the holiness of God in Jesus Christ, holiness in Immanuel, in His divine Person united to a sinless, impeccable humanity, oh how attractive it is! For that holiness is the source and secret of all sanctification. It is a wonderful, blessed truth that what the Lord Jesus is in His human nature, deriving virtue from His Person is communicable to poor sinners so that all that He has is made theirs.

'Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises.' That is, the things for which He is praised are fearful, many of them. It comes to mind that word in the 24th Isaiah, a terrible chapter describing the condition of things in those perilous times when the earth was upside-down and everything in a state of chaos, and the tumult of the people, but "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord," to see His majesty in His terrible judgments. "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires" (Is. 24:13-5). He is "fearful in praises." It also intends this: the sacred awe that by the Spirit is impressed upon the heart at the majesty of God in His mercies and in His judgments: "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing" (Ps. 101:1), who is 'fearful in praises.' I thought of it at the commencement of the 107th Psalm: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the

hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands" (v. 2-3). "Let the redeemed say so." Can we say so? Have we any evidence that we are among the redeemed? (although there would be a solemn prohibition upon anybody else to praise Him but the redeemed). "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name" (Ps. 103 v. 1). Have we anything within us that dares to bless Him? Carnality cannot; unbelief cannot; the lusts of the flesh cannot bless Him. "All that is within me"! What a mercy it is to have the Spirit's witness that we have another mind, a new creature, that can truly bless God, having received spiritual blessings from Him.

'Who is ... fearful in praises, doing wonders.' Oh how suitable He is! Doing wonders was one of His names: "His name shall be called Wonderful" (Is. 9:6). Wonders in creation, wonders in providence, and wonders in grace! Oh, I feel it is important continually to examine ourselves as we read the Word of God, as to whether we are in it, in the faith, in Christ, in these promises. 'Doing wonders!' Now, are there some here whose case is such that you need nothing less than wonders wrought? Heman was in such a low state. He felt his death. That 88th Psalm is very precious. It is the saddest Psalm in the whole book, to my mind, but I believe that I have derived as much comfort from that sad Psalm as from any. He felt his death: "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Ps. 88:10-2) Have you ever been to the Lord with your case, and run into that Name of His, "a Strong Tower?" (Prov. 18:10) "His name shall be called Wonderful." You have run into it because you need wonders wrought. You need the power of His resurrection in your heart, the wonders of His redeeming blood, of His glorious righteousness. You need deliverance. That one word may adequately express, and that only, your need. I believe I feel it. You will be thankful for the helps, thankful for encouragements, but they are not enough. Some of you may be just here; you want complete deliverance. Well then, 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods, the mighty ones?' Who else can do us any good? All the members of Parliament, though we respect all of them – what good are they? How different to consider God! There is none like Him. Therefore you will be brought exclusively and completely to depend upon Him and be thankful that He is what He is, and condescended to be what He is in a dear Redeemer, and united poor sinners unto Himself in Christ.

'Who is like unto Thee among the mighty ones? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed.' That is, He has led them forth out of Egypt. But Pharaoh pursued them. The Lord told Moses that He would. He hardened his heart so that he followed after them. And if we are brought out of Egypt we shall find that truth more or less to the end. The devil, the god of this world, and his emissaries will pursue His people. David found it so, and feared he would one day fall by the hand of Saul. There will be songs of deliverance as we go through the valley of tears, and we shall be brought from time to time to exclaim as did the disciples in the boat, "What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Mat. 8:27; Mk 4:41)

In this chapter these people are designated by two different terms. Here it is 'the people which Thou hast redeemed.' In the 16th verse it is "till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased." Here is a redeemed and purchased people, and you will trace their goings throughout the Scriptures. Yes, their rebellion and unfaithfulness and backslidings and sins, and God's goodness, His immutability, all that He is as exclaimed in the 11th verse, you will see manifested towards them as He led them about and instructed them and proved

them, to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep His commandments or no" (Deut. 8 v. 2). But oh, how blessed it is to trace the Lord's goings in our experience! Yes, Asaph did when brought very low in the 77th Psalm; he felt the Lord's "mercy clean gone for ever," and that He would be favourable no more, and in anger had "shut up His tender mercies." But, says he, when faith was strengthened, "This is my infirmity." This is not the Lord's doing; His mercy endures for ever. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High" (v. 7-10). He remembered His wonders of old.

'Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people whom Thou hast redeemed.' This mercy is covenant mercy. It was established in the covenant of grace. The Lord Jesus is called "the Mercy" (Lk 1:72). All mercy is in Him, and it is

"mercy joined with power."

(J Hart; Gadsby's 780)

It is joined with power in this text: 'Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people whom Thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them by Thy strength.' Oh how suitable the Gospel is! But if we are made suitable for the Gospel, we shall know what it is to be in captivity, what it is to be brought out of Egypt. And yet in three days the people were murmuring because of the bitterness of the waters (v. 24). His love is immutable. He suffered their stiff-necked rebellion through the wilderness, and said at one time "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" (Hos. 11:8) – impossible to give him up, because of the covenant of grace.

'Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people' out of Egypt. Well, the great thing is, my friends, has He led *us* forth? It is no use just reading this history. It is really a type of conversion, of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Some have compared Pharaoh to the law, but I cannot believe so. The law is holy, good, and just; Pharaoh was the opposite. Pharaoh represents this world which "lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). A mercy to be delivered from it, and to "come out from among them and be separate" (2 Cor. 6:17)! And we might well come soberly to our own cases, and see whether we have ever had the beginning on the way to the city of habitation. Thou – that God of whom we have been speaking – Thou in Thy infinite wisdom, omnipotent power, divine sovereignty, immutability, omniscience, and omnipresence – 'Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people.' I believe that it is good to examine ourselves. We go on; we may accumulate a great deal of religion, and it may be correct; but the point is, have we any evidence of being led forth out of Egypt, out of ourselves? The Canaanites would dwell in the land, and we shall always have the being of sin within. Nature is not altered when God calls a sinner by grace. Oh, but the strong man armed is disarmed, sin is subdued, and therefore this is the beginning of what we were trying to speak about on Lord's Day evening, and when the Lord has led us forth out of Egypt, we shall pray "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. 17:5).

"Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed." It is a redeemed people. So we have redemption here. To redeem a thing is to buy it back (a thing that is sold or pawned). Adam sold the human race, and we have confirmed the sale by our actual transgressions. We have sold ourselves for naught (Is. 52:3). Redemption is to buy a thing back, but oh, the price of redemption! If the Holy Spirit should bring into our hearts the mercy in the text that was in redemption, we should hate sin. Here we have the Redeemer. The Father sent him. No other ransom could be found; no other price would be acceptable to the law; no other riches but the unsearchable riches of Christ's Person and work which paid the debt and satisfied the demands of the law to redeem His people; and that redemption work is finished, and the Holy Ghost, sooner or later in experience, will work that

redemption in the soul of a poor sinner, give him to feel his need of it, and bring him with weeping and supplication to the footstool of divine mercy and grace.

'Thou hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed.' This leading forth is the whole of soul experience from the time that they are brought out of Egypt to the land of Canaan, to heaven. Oh, what a leading forth it is! In the previous chapter you will find that they were not led through the way of the Philistines, which was near (Ex. 13:17). They could have been led into Canaan in a very short time, but He "led them about." Sometimes they were going in exactly the opposite direction, but in the purposes of God they were moving toward Canaan, and so you will find there are times when He brings you "into darkness but not into light" (Lam. 3:2), and you cannot find your paths. This is His leading forth to purge, to sanctify, to instruct and prove us, and "Blessed is the man that endureth" these temptations and afflictions, "for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (Jas. 1:2).

'Guided them in Thy strength.' Well, I have none, and God knows. Indeed, He weakens my strength in the way; and therefore we are compelled to confess, and that with thankfulness, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day" (Acts 26:22), and have this hope at the bottom:

*"He who has helped me hitherto
Will help me all my journey through." (J Newton; Gadsby's 961)*

But 'Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.' That is where he guides His people in His strength. He is exalted in His strength, and the excellency of his power is of God (2 Cor. 4:7). Unto Him is the kingdom and the glory. But this habitation, to my mind, intends three things particularly. In the first place is Christ Himself. We have the same thing really in the 17th verse: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established." And that Sanctuary is, first of all, the Lord Jesus, that "true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2), essentially so, because if we refer to it as it is to be revealed to the Church of God, yet the fulness of Christ is in the Church. There is nothing in the Church but what is from Him and of Him. And you will feel this. He is the Sun in the firmament of the Gospel. His is the kingdom and the power and the glory, and the Holy Spirit leads His people out of Egypt, out from self, out from the world, out from a false profession if they are in one, into His holy habitation. And Moses himself again sings of it in the 90th Psalm: "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations" (v. 1). A beautiful opening of that Psalm, as is the next one: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). Now that dwelling-place and secret place is first of all in the bosom of God the Father in His electing immutable love. That secret place is the covenant of grace. Oh, but it is in Christ Jesus, to be made a new creature in Christ, to have eternal union with Him, for Him to be our Head, for us to partake of His living root.

'Guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.' But then in the wilderness the Holy Spirit carries on a work of grace in those exact individuals whom Christ has redeemed, who were given unto Him by the Father in the covenant of grace. Oh, I have sometimes stood amazed and wondered at the infinite knowledge of God with respect to His dear people! The Holy Ghost teaches the very same individuals and brings them in. Not only are they in mercy led forth and guided to His holy habitation, but "Thou shalt *bring* them in." Now this embraces, with regard to the Lord's people, providence and grace. His leadings are to be observed in both. Now some of you perhaps can see how the Lord has united

providence and grace in your experience, and that makes providence with respect to His people different from what it is generally among men, and for this reason: the providences of God's people were in the covenant, and the covenant of grace is in their providence. Oh what a difference it makes! And therefore their bitterest sorrows, their heaviest troubles, their darkest pathways, their deepest places, are timed and ordained by this covenant of grace, ordered in all things without exception, so that He leads them about. How many of us would be here but for this? Oh, when I look back I wonder where I should have been! I have to say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that" I am "not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22). But they fail not because God *is* God, because He is immutable. But hasn't He led you about? Do you remember the days of your youth? He does. He says by Jeremiah "I remember thee ... the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. 2:2). The Lord remembers that kindness.

But He leads His people in His providence, and brings them to feel such a deep need of Him, gives them to feel that this world is a city of destruction, discovers to them what they are in in all their ruin and sin, and then brings them under the rod of the Gospel into the bond of the covenant. Oh, how blessed were those days of our spiritual youth! How lively we were! How sweet the Name of Jesus did sound! 'Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people whom Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.' But I see the time is gone.

But the third habitation is heaven, and really the three are not different. No, Christ *is* heaven. Heaven without Him would be no heaven, and His Church on earth, the assemblies of His saints, the provision which He has promised to bless, the manifestations by the Holy Spirit of Christ to the soul, is heaven upon earth. But those who are favoured to be safely gathered into heaven will there worship Him without infirmity, without sin, without limitations, except creature-ship. We shall be creatures throughout all eternity.

Oh, may the Lord grant that this mercy may come to us and to our dear young people, that He may lead them to His holy habitation and bring them in, bring them in here, if it could please Him, and plant them as trees of His right hand planting in the courts of the Lord.

Amen.