

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on
Wed. Evg., 9th August, 1961

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Text: - Hebrews xiii.8.

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This declaration of the eternity and immutability of Christ is in the context connected with the preaching of the Gospel: "Remember them that have the rule over you"; or the margin is, "Remember them which are the guides over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever". There is nothing else to preach to sinners but this glorious Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. We are changing creatures; in every sense of necessity we ~~change~~ change. Our persons change. We are children, and grow up into youth and into manhood. We have evidence of mortal decay. Old age comes, and then the last change, that solemn change when we exchange time for eternity. And not only are we changing in our persons, but we are in the midst of ever-changing circumstances. While God, who is the infinite Creator, and He who controls all providences, is Himself immutable, yet providence is mutable and changing. And I believe that is one intention in that Psalm that we read: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and all that dwell therein. He hath founded it upon the seas". It is a remarkable expression, that is the whole of providence, and all our circumstances, and what transpires in this world, the different dispensations, have no foundation in themselves. They are not founded upon a rock, but upon the seas, the risings and sinkings, swellings and heavings. And so you will have traced your pathway, your circumstances, as well as yourself, that everything is changing, moving, restless, in the wilderness.

And not only so, We are subject to changes in our feelings. I am not speaking so much now of natural feelings; they are subject to changes. But those of which we read, there are those who have no changes, therefore they fear not God. Mysteriously when one is called by grace, they become subject to changes which they never knew before, and such as those who are destitute of faith know nothing about. And it will be so while we are in the wilderness, and it is for a purpose. Oh to recognize, to distinguish through all these changes in every way, consider the unchanging and eternal God! He is carrying on His undisturbed affairs in the midst of all our disturbances. But with respect to the soul. Oh what changes come over the soul! Like the sky naturally, you may begin a morning with sunshine, but clouds obscure the sun and there may be thunderstorms, or in the winter frosts. And are not some of you conscious of these changes in your soul? Much of it is in the promises of God in allowing circumstances, temptations. But all these things are to prove us, establish, strengthen, and settle us in the truth as it is in Jesus, and to prepare us for heaven.

So speaking of we who are met together within these walls, there are as many conditions doubtless as there are people. Although the Holy Spirit has but one teaching, and His people are being led forth to the same city of habitation, yet each one is appointed to their own particular pathway, and the Lord has sovereignly appointed what we shall come into, the obstacles, difficulties, enemies, afflictions, diseases, disappointments, calamities, and what you feel in your own experience as you look back in regard to your person, and to your circumstances, and to your pathway, and the conflict of your soul, that everything is

changing. And that makes this truth very blessed - "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever", and nothing can alter it, not all our changes, not all our sinnings, not all our backslidings, nothing in our life. Not the devil and all his agents, not the world and all its confusion, can alter this blessed truth, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever".

It brings to my mind a hymn which very blessedly sets this forth:

"Without beginning or decline,
Object of faith, and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw Him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence".

Oh to know this glorious eternal Person! And you will connect the chapter that we read (Prov.8), perhaps the most blessed in the Old Testament concerning Christ. With what majesty He speaks of His eternity and immutability. There is something very blessedly majestic in it: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. When there were no depths I was brought forth; when He prepared the heavens I was there; when He established the clouds above... when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him - the same yesterday". Strictly speaking, as He is the eternal God and infinite, He has no past and no future. He "fills His own immortal now", and He (is) ever blessed.

But we have in the text Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and we have read how He was set up from everlasting, that is in the covenant of grace, in the eternal counsels of God. There the infinite wisdom of Jehovah declared what those counsels were with respect to the sons of men. "Unto you, O men! I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." I think we mentioned at Tunbridge Wells (Aug.7th), it is very solemn to be a man. It is the only creature that God can speak to, and created for that purpose. "Unto you, O men! I call." And all the purposes, and counsels, and decrees of Jehovah in the covenant of grace were to be accomplished by this blessed Man. It was there that it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. And in the covenant of grace there was, if one might so speak, concentrated all that the church should need down through all time, all the love that should be conveyed by the Holy Spirit to quicken, all the grace necessary to save and sanctify, all the offices necessary to be executed by the Lord Jesus as the Surety, the great High Priest, the Intecessor - all were established in the covenant of grace. "He is the same yesterday."

And this is connected with experience in time. I wish I could preach Christ. I need Him badly enough. Sometimes He is precious in looking at Jesus Christ yesterday. I know it really is a contradiction to speak of eternity past, but human language is very weak in expressing the inexpressible things of God. But to faith the consideration of Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace, and to see that all blessings of salvation and of gracious experience flow from the accomplishment of those purposes by the Spirit in the hearts of the Lord's people, it makes Jesus Christ yesterday to be exceedingly important and precious. If it were not for the sovereign, and divine, and unalterable decrees and counsels of Jehovah in the covenant of grace, then nothing would be what it is in salvation in the church of God, nor in the future. And there is something very solid about it. Nothing can affect it, nothing disannul it, nothing frustrate it.

Now, if you pause for a moment and search your heart, and ask the Lord to tell you, to give you a token for good of your interest in that covenant, and there it was that in the Lamb's book of life ~~was~~ written by the finger of Jehovah all the names of every individual that Christ should redeem, for whom He should come and suffer, bleed, and die, that is "Jesus Christ yesterday".

"And to-day." "To-day" refers to time, from Adam's day to the end of time. But in experience it more particularly intends our individual experience, our day. It brings to mind a very gracious word in the 37th Psalm: "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance is of Him, saith the Lord". We spoke just now of the different circumstances among the people, and therefore in experience there ^{are} as many different days here as there are people; but the difference makes no difference to the Lord Jesus. As He was in eternity, so He is to-day. Nothing can alter. Those decrees cannot be altered, can never be abrogated. They must take effect to-day. And if we consider this glorious Man Christ Jesus in all His immutability, it will be a comfort to us that He is the same to-day, the 9th August, 1961, the same to-day and every day, and it matters not what day you are passing through. It may be a day of sorrow, of confusion, of loss, disappointment, a day of pain and affliction. It will bring in the suitability of this glorious Man, and it will also bring into a very blessed relief how He manifested who He was in His day, that is in His sojourn here upon the earth. "The same to-day."

He went about doing good, casting out devils and unclean spirits, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead. He is the same to-day, and what He did for the body He does for the soul. And we have a warrant, indeed that is the very purpose of Christ's miracles, we have a warrant to go to Him and ask Him to do for us to-day and every day what is recorded of Him. There were those that pressed upon Him to touch Him. They were healed of all their infirmities. He is the same to-day, and therefore whatever our state or case may be, there is a fulness in Him suitable to every occasion. He is an infallible Physician of body and soul, and oh what soul diseases there will be to take to Him! "The same to-day", whatever calamity may overtake, however we may tremble before a mighty enemy. Faith will see in Him omnipotence, invincible grace. And this eternity and immutability of Christ Jesus derives from His glorious Person. He is the eternal God, the eternal Son. Omnipotent He is, above all the earth; indeed, He created it and controls it. And He controls His people differently from how He controls the universe. He controls the universe by sheer naked omnipotence. He controls His dear people by covenant love. Oh this blessed Person! I increasingly need Him as infirmities increase. He is my only hope, and He would not be that except He is able to save them to the uttermost. Yes, I need Him who is such a High Priest as can save them to the uttermost that come unto God through Him.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day." Take it with respect to circumstances for a moment, for we are affected by them, and as we go here and there and visit His dear troubled and afflicted people, why my friends, the only comfort that we can minister to them is the unchangeability of this divine Person. Oh to see Him will truly make ~~a~~ affliction light and but for a moment! "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to-day." Therefore cast thy burden upon Him, cast all your

care upon Him. I know we are so involved in things that press upon us and affect our poor minds, and the devil knows when to shoot his fiery darts. Unbelief, and atheism, and a carnal mind together will bring us to conclusions which are entirely wrong. It brought Asaph almost to believe that God's mercy was clean gone for ever, and that He would be favourable no more, that in anger He had shut up His tender mercies. But what brought him to his senses? The text. "I said, this is my infirmity." These unbelieving fears, these conclusions because my way is shut up, because where I had planned for success I find failure, because where I had hope I find disappointment, because my gourds are blasted and I am laid low - but this is my infirmity. But what brought him out of it? "I will remember the years of old." He would remember that the Lord Jesus is the same to-day as He was yesterday. And He is the same in your greatest trials, as He was with the disciples in the ship. He was asleep with His head on a pillow, apparently taking no notice of them, and the waves were threatening their destruction. He did it purposely, but He was the same. He knew what He would do, and He knows what He will do with you. The same to-day, and the same in all your circumstances. "Whatever you find Him at your best, He's at your worst the same." Oh what a comfort! "How happy is that man that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord His God." Who else can be happy? With whom would you change places? I have seen one or two afflicted people, one deprived of hearing and sight and very feeble, and yet two of them in such a place that I don't know what I should do if I was there; but their language was, "I would not have one thing altered". Upon what basis can that be honestly said? The text - "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever". And I was thinking in singing the hymn, that for substance and indeed in truth, ~~this text can be stamped across every hymn we sing.~~ It is the basis and foundation of all experience. And you will see it written upon every chapter of the Bible and every hymn we sing, and indeed every prayer we pray. Oh what a Sun He is, a glorious Sun in the firmament of the Gospel, the firmament of the church! And as the natural sun by the same glorious Creator controls all the influences of this world, so the Sun of Righteousness controls all in the church of God and everything in our soul's experience.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And this gives a sweet hope for the future. Indeed, you will discern in these three things concerning this one blessed Person, hope - hope that has its rise in the eternal Jehovah and that runs through the Person, and incarnation, and work, and sufferings, and glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and through Him by the Spirit runs through and takes up as a lifeline to which the anchor is fixed, every child of grace, every vessel of mercy; and the other end of this hope anchors into that which is within the veil, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Oh what a Pilot He is! Not only is He the same ~~to-day~~ as all the covenant of grace has declared Him to be and Jehovah set Him up there, not only is He the same to-day as then, but He ever will be. And it does take in too - which is very vital - His offices. It is unchangeable; it proceeds from the immutable love of God that can never change, and it is never diverted from its object. "He rests in His love." These objects of the electing love of the Father are the objects of the love of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and it is never taken away from that object and transferred to another.

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

And with respect to that central office, if we might so speak, of His great Highpriesthood, we read concerning its eternity and unchangeability this, that "this Man" - this Man in the text - "this Man", through the whole of the Scriptures, "this Man, because He continues ever, hath an unchanging Priesthood". Oh that will help poor sinners, because wherever there is a priest, there must be a sacrifice and an altar, and wherever there is a priest, sacrifice, and altar, there must be a sinner! A High Priest and a sinner are intimately connected, and therefore that great High Priest will be a centre in your experience. And He is the same eternally, He ever liveth. Oh that was made something to me a fortnight ago! I felt I was finished for preaching; tried to pray, but could not. When I did try to pray, they seemed but idle feeble words, went no farther than the chair at which I was kneeling. But this - oh He sends His word and heals them - is what made that poor feeble prayer go far beyond the ceiling, it was this: "He ever liveth to make intercession", and I felt He lived at that moment. Oh to believe in an exalted, ever-living, immutable Christ, a great High Priest! And the greatness of His Priesthood is His Person. Have you ever thought of the mystery and mercy, that this glorious Man can be continually spoken of without wearing out and coming to an end? The teaching of the Holy Ghost in the soul makes room for Him. It takes in all conviction of sin, all that solemn captivity under the law, and brings in the necessity of Christ to deliver. He is the Deliverer, a great High Priest, a Mediator between God and men, because He was set up thus in eternity past.

Therefore this Priesthood embraces His precious sin-atoning blood, and speaking of the future we sing, "For sins to come there's pardon too". Oh my friends, when you come to the end of the earth, come to the end of your little bit of wisdom, the end of your religion and your praying, to the end of reading the Word of God, come to the end of everything, yet His fulness is the same, His love, His mercy, His grace. These divine graces of the Spirit are, like the inheritance, incorruptible. Nothing can corrupt grace. It comes to corruption, it comes to defilement; but nothing can defile grace; and what it is, it ever was and ~~shall~~ ever will be. There is that in the Gospel which is eternal. Nothing can decay, nothing can die. There is no desolation in it, no death. And with respect to the purposes of God there is no contingency, there can be no accident. He is the same, and His eternal thought moves on His undisturbed affairs. It would be a comfort to us when we are filled with confusion. Poor Job says, "I am filled with confusion, and it increases". Cannot you see the text running through all the histories of those who are gone before? And it was through those changing scenes that His people are taught to profit, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is to be proved in experience, and therefore it is that the Word of God is unalterable, inviolable, eternal, and it makes it a foundation. You can rest the weight of your immortal soul, your concerns for time and eternity, upon the Word of God; and the written and the incarnate Word in all things are the same, so that whatever comes to us, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The same in His power. His mercy is the same; it is divine.

And what appears to me and as I feel it, that it is indeed an inexpressible blessing, that the eternal things of Christ, which are unchangeable and eternal, are communicated to poor dying creatures, so that in Christ, by the Spirit, men chosen of God are intimately and directly connected with Jehovah. All the interests of God in Christ in the world are centred in His dear people, and His glory is in their salvation. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And I feel that the repetition of these "ands" are not insignificant. There is an "and" to emphasize to troubled people. You may read the Word of God and see what He was in eternity, and may be so troubled in your circumstances and soul that it seems to obliterate what He is to-day. But this will help us to pray. Come to Him, oh troubled sinner, and remind Him of what He is! He would not be offended. Some of you have had to do it when you feel so sinful, insignificant it may be, dark, come to Him with the Word of God in your hand, and say, "Lord Jesus, Thy Word declares Thou art the same to-day as yesterday, oh wilt Thou make it out to me in this my trouble and distress?"

"The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He will be the same to-morrow and for ever. So whatever comes to us, although this takes us into eternity really. It will be a great word when we come to a dying day. That will be the day, our last day, and last hour, and last moment - "the same". Oh for the eternal Son of God to come to us and to make Himself our Refuge, our Foundation, in a dying moment! I have not the ability to speak of this text, but oh I do pray to be inside of it! If we are inside of it, it will be well, and the righteous are there. I say again - it is a simple word - but if we are inside this text, it can be written across every circumstance and changing scene, as well as all the conflicts of our soul, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever". It will be the same Lord. How it made David look forward to his end and say, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness"! Bad as I am, I have had moments when I believe I shall know Him, and know Him upon the ground of the text. If you know Him to-day - He takes a form to faith, that you see Him as did Moses, and he endured as seeing Him. Is not there a kind of a sight of Christ in your experience as by the Spirit you are taught what you are, what sin and ruin is, and the Gospel of the grace of God is revealed, His unchanging love, His enduring mercy, His all-sufficient grace, His sin-atonement sacrifice, that you know and see Him in His work? I have had moments when I have believed I ~~shall~~ shall know Him when I get to heaven. And so will you. You will say, "That is that blessed Man". "For ever" - no change in Him.

Well, may the Lord help us. I feel to mourn over my failure in attempting to speak of Him, but may the Spirit bear witness of Him in your hearts.
