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**Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
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Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. 4 v. 16

This chapter, as indeed the whole of this epistle, contains some very solemn warnings and gracious exhortations. What a faithful apostle was Paul! What a mercy it is to be made faithful to the souls of men and not to deceive them. He commences this chapter "Let us therefore fear," and the text seems somewhat opposite, and it may look contrary to that exhortation. "Let us therefore fear;" here, 'Let us therefore come boldly,' and in between the two he shows what it is both to fear and to come boldly. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest" (v. 11), for in labouring to enter into that rest there will be a fear lest they should come short of it. There would also be an encouragement, "seeing therefore that some must enter therein" (v. 6), so there would be a sanctified driving force under a fear of falling by unbelief, and a drawing force, seeing that there are some who *must* enter therein.

So that upon each of these points the apostle gives a reason for the exhortation: "Let us therefore fear" - lest we prove to be amongst those that draw back, in whom God has no pleasure. But here the ground for boldness is in the great High Priest. It was a cause for murmuring with respect to the Pharisees, and so it is today and ever will be. "The Pharisees murmured, saying, This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Lk 15 v. 2). But there are many difficulties in coming to the throne of grace, difficulties that a nominal professor knows nothing of. They can pray with no difficulty. You will remember that lately we were speaking from the preceding chapter, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," and if you take that word, the 12th verse in the preceding chapter to the 12th verse of this chapter, you will see the solemnity of it. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (ch. 3 v. 12). "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful ... piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (ch. 4 v. 12).

Now for a poor sinner who has known something of the power of that Word of God penetrating into the conscience, "quick" (that is, living) "and powerful," dissecting his heart, dividing asunder his soul and spirit, discerning the thoughts and intents of his heart - oh, what a discovery! This is what makes it difficult to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace.' Those who have never been thus convinced, in whose consciences the true heavenly light has not shined, when our secret sins are set before God in the light of His countenance, such who have never known themselves to be sinners in that way - they have no difficulty to pray, nor to preach, nor to hear, nor to believe. So there are difficulties which belong to those that possess faith, that may appear to be very mysterious; but godliness is a mystery, not only in its glorious Source, the mystery of incarnate Deity, but it is a mystery in the experience of the soul. So that there are difficulties which belong to those who have the sentence of death in themselves (2 Cor. 1 v. 9). What a mercy that is, to be given to see the "end of all perfection" (Ps 119 v. 96), not only generally, but in our own self, in our own flesh, and to know that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing (Rom. 7 v. 18), but rather that we are impregnated and saturated with sin in every fibre of our being. It is not easy to

'come boldly unto the throne of grace' in such a ruined condition as that, but they are the only people that are received. "This Man receiveth sinners," and sinners *are* sinners. There is no qualification – it is "sinners." "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (v. 13). To know this truth in our consciences is very solemn. To be ignorant of it is worse. Ignorance isn't innocence. If we are ignorant of our condition, it is no immunity from it, and therefore one of the greatest blessings next to manifest pardon is conviction of sin. I feel it more increasingly that it is very solemn. God knows, I have trembled more under this in my later days, under a sense of what I am in my depraved nature, and that incurable disease that is in my loins, than ever I did before. But I can say this, that it does make Christ precious; it gives a meaning to the Gospel, and, as we have often said, and shall while breath remains, for it is a most comfortable truth, that the glorious Gospel and all the blessings and benefits it contains meet the exact opposite. And so did the condescension of God's dear Son. He stooped, that glorious One – stooped

*"... to wretchedness and dust,
That guilty worms might rise.*

(A Steele; Gadsby's 95)

It goes to the opposite. He who knew no sin was made sin that sinners might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5 v. 21). It takes two opposites. Have you ever been thankful for it? Suppose that the Lord should have looked down upon earth to find men that were righteous, that had some qualifications in them that He could love, and would make them worthy of Himself: it would be no Gospel, no beauty, and bring no glory to God!

So these convinced sinners are elsewhere exhorted to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace.' But then there is something more needed than conviction of sin. There is the great High Priest. Conviction of sin in itself is not salvation. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (v. 14), notwithstanding what we are convinced of and feel. Paul has the same word in the 10th chapter: "Cast not away therefore" – it is the same "therefore," refers to the same glorious Person, to the Sacrifice, and this great High Priest – "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (ch. 10 v. 35). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens." And the greatness of this High Priest is by reason of His divine Person united with humanity. Oh, He says to His Father, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not require, but a body hast Thou prepared Me" (ch. 10 v. 5). A high priest must be a man, as I think it is in the next chapter: "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (ch. 5 v. 1). "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest, but He that said unto Him, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (ch. 5 v. 5), "as He saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (ch. 5 v. 6).

And therefore the apostle continues, with respect to the greatness of the High Priest: "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchanging priesthood; wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (ch. 7 v. 24-5). Now *there* is a ground of boldness, and upon that ground our hymn is composed:

*"The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,*

*Is welcome to a throne of grace,
The Saviour's blood to plead."*

(W Gadsby; Gadsby's 527)

And so invariably the poor sinner will find that the Lord Jesus Christ is set before him as the Object of his faith and the foundation of his hope. You will never find it in yourself. No! Oh, how significant is that solemn word in Genesis, when God turned out the man from the Garden of Eden and set in place the flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life (Gen. 3 v. 24)! There is no getting back to God through Eden; but, says dear Mr Hart,

*"But banished thence, we fly to thee,
O Garden of Gethsemane."*

(J Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 153)

What a contrast between beautiful Eden and man unfallen there, in his created perfect righteousness and innocence, and the Garden of Gethsemane – to see God's eternal, only-begotten Son in human nature prostrate upon the ground, sweating drops of blood! That is where poor sinners must flee now, and in Him who sits upon this throne is "the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2 v. 9). On one occasion I could see heaven in that word "bodily." And therefore "He is not ashamed to call" His people "brethren" (ch. 2 v. 11), and such was His love that "the children" being "partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (ch. 2 v. 14). He could never occupy any office except He was a Man, and that office could not be executed to "send forth judgment unto victory" (Mat. 12 v. 20) unless He was God. How great then is this great High Priest!

The Aaronic priesthood changed from hand to hand by reason of death, and their sacrifices were useless with respect to pardon. They could "never take away sins" (Heb. 10 v. 11). In these sacrifices there was a remembrance of sin once every year. But this great High Priest says the opposite: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (ch. 8 v. 12). In the old dispensation they were brought every year, but this glorious Man remembers them no more. That is the reason: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.' It is very blessed when this invitation – exhortation – reaches a self-condemned trembling sinner's heart. Not only at the beginning, but we shall need it constantly. Asaph did: he so acted as he felt himself to be a beast before the Lord, yet, said he, "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 73 v. 22, 28). And what an amazing Scripture is this: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (Jas. 4 v. 8). Oh the mystery, the grace of it, that the most holy God can meet with unholy sinners and bless them!

'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,' and not cast away our confidence, but hold fast our profession (Heb. 10 v. 35; 4 v. 14). Now really all our life long our profession will fall into two things. We shall always in our profession confess our sins, our unworthiness; we shall always confess as we feel it our depravity, our lost condition. That will be in our profession. We shall never be anything better than sinners while we live. But oh, in our profession there will also be a profession by faith, believing in this great High Priest, in the Son of God, to see in Him that grace, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5 v. 20). To have set before us continually the merits of Christ derived from His glorious Person, and made communicable from His fulness to poor sinners, is a comfort and a strength to faith, and the only ground and foundation by which we can come and make our worst condition known before Him.

So Paul says 'Let us come boldly.' There is "a new and living Way" which the Lord Jesus "hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (ch. 10 v. 20). He has made a way of access unto God. Oh the benefits of this great High Priest! And where there is no sin there is no Priest needed, and no sacrifice, and no altar; but in Him we see every provision that a sinner can possibly need, not only to blot out sin "as a thick cloud" (Is. 44 v. 22), but to clothe him in the everlasting righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another qualification of this High Priest is that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (v. 15), and therefore He knows our infirmities. The mystery of this is very great; very difficult it is to express, but some of you might have felt it. I felt it for three or four seconds this morning. If it were not for Christ and those offices for which He was appointed, if we were merely convinced of sin and had no Mediator, no High Priest, no throne of grace, what a condition of black despair we should be in! Do you feel like that? It is a great thing. There are many religious people who know nothing of that. If there was no Christ, no redemption, no Mediator, no great High Priest, no Calvary, and yet we were convinced of sin, there is no substitute, no other refuge; and this will make Christ precious to us; and yet to see that that rich fulness which is in Him, which can never be diminished, a living fulness, rich fulness, eternal fulness, is there to be emptied out into the heart for the supply, support, salvation, redemption, and sanctification of His people. Oh, one sings,

*"Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity."*

(C Wesley; Gadsby's Sel. 303)

'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,' because He who sits upon that throne possesses all the fulness of God, all the fulness of grace. Whatever you want, come to the throne of grace for it. He has unsearchable riches for the poor; He has pardon for the guilty, righteousness to cover the naked.

'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy.' We need mercy, and we shall feel it. Mercy and misery meeting together is very suitable. You will need mercy to come, bringing into your heart the love of God in Christ. It is through His infinite mercy that He smiles upon a poor trembling sinner. You may perhaps dread to find justice, and yet have you ever felt this? Such is your desire for the glory of God that you would not, if you could, be saved unjustly. But this mercy is *just* mercy, and if you find this mercy, you will find God's justice in His Gospel, which is very different from His justice in the law, as we were reading just now in Hebrews 12. Moses at Mount Sinai said "I exceedingly fear and quake," but he says "Ye are come" not to that Mount, but "unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (ch. 12 v. 22). The demands of the Gospel are no less stringent than those of the law; indeed, they are greater. The law says "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Love your enemies" (Mat. 5 v. 38, 44). But the difference is this, my friends, that the law gives nothing of what it demands, but the Gospel gives what it demands.

*"Run, run, and work, the law commands,
Yet finds me neither feet nor hands;
But sweeter news the Gospel brings;
It bids me fly, and lends me wings."*

(J Berridge; Gadsby's 49)

What then? 'Come boldly unto the throne of grace.' You will find there what you want; you will get exchanges at that market. Come "without money and without price" (Is. 55 v. 1). You will get "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Is. 61 v. 3). Come boldly; bring your hard questions. The Lord will answer them there.

'That we may obtain mercy.' There is something about the very sound of mercy that is sweet, and yet there is not a greater insult you can offer to an independent man than mercy. No, it is only needed and appreciated by the helpless, such as are described as being robbed and wounded and half dead in a ditch; that is the man that needs and finds mercy.

'That we may obtain mercy, and find grace.' Mercy and grace! They are both free; they are priceless; they cannot be bought, cannot be borrowed, cannot be learned. You cannot learn mercy; you cannot learn grace; but they can be obtained and found at the throne of grace. Beautiful twin graces are these, and you will never find one without obtaining the other. I have thought of mercy that opens the door to the poor sinner knocking. Some of you may have been long at mercy's door. A look of divine mercy from Calvary into your poor heart, seeing your needs, hearing your groans, comes with supplies. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12 v. 9). 'Come boldly.' It is free. If you have no money, come "without money and without price." Oh, how free the Gospel is, and yet how precious – nothing so valuable, nothing to compare with it in this world; and this is the kingdom of God entering into a poor sinner. If you come to this throne of grace, you will 'obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need,' and receive "a kingdom which cannot be moved" (ch. 12 v. 28). For this mercy represents all the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1 v. 3), all the benefits of the Gospel. Come boldly for them. And therefore you can now look at your own case, and take with you just what you are. Oh, what a mercy, what a relief prayer is! It is wonderful to come boldly. Jeremiah did in that scripture: "Though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy Name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee" (Jer. 14 v. 7). That is to come boldly. 'Come, Lord, and so far as our case is concerned, if it were not for mercy and grace, we should be condemned; but though it testifies against us, "do Thou it for Thy Name's sake.'" And his boldness at the throne of grace increased: "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst Thou be ... as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?" (Jer. 14 v. 8-9) Now this is boldness – boldness to reverently argue with the Lord at the throne of grace. Oh, I have admired the holy, reverent rudeness of faith at the throne of grace! Oh, the "hope of Israel"! Jeremiah saw there was hope, and arguing upon the immutable love of God in Christ: "Why shouldst Thou be ... as a wayfaring man, Lord?" (Jer. 14 v. 8) Why, if you look at the case, we might say, 'Why shouldst Thou not be as I?'

'Find grace to help in time of need.' It takes in body and soul, temporal and providential matters and soul conflicts, takes in life, takes in death. 'Find grace' – there is something sweet in this obtaining mercy and finding grace. It is not as though it is put on some kind of a shelf, and you *take* mercy; you *obtain* it, as though the Lord had got it laid up ready for you. The Lord "knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nah. 1 v. 7), and when He sees a poor child of His coming to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, He has got it; He obtained it Himself for them. And then he finds grace in every time of need. This finding of grace is very precious, because you will be brought to extremities, come to the complete end of all your

wisdom and resources; but then you find grace. You have not been able to find any strength or wisdom in yourself, and things are contrary; united trials meet. But when you come to your wits' end, you will find grace. Oh, what a wonderful thing prayer is – to 'obtain mercy, and find grace'! And sometimes you are ready to sink, and feel you must give up, and you find grace. I love grace – it *is* a charming sound. And the promise is that grace will reign, and it is greater than all things, greater than sin, greater than the devil; it is invincible, eternal grace, God's grace; and you find it.

And we shall need dying grace. Oh, David was a sinner, and no little sinner either, but oh, how he could pray! Look at his Psalms. He obtained mercy and found grace; and he found grace at the end: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Why? Because there is no evil there? No. "For Thou art with me." The same Person, the great High Priest, is with me; infinite wisdom is with me; eternal love is with me; saving grace is with me. I shall not fear, "for Thou art with me; Thy rod" - Thy Gospel, for He shall send the rod of His strength out of Zion (Ps. 110 v. 2), and it is that rod that holds a poor sinner in the valley of the shadow of death – I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff" (Thy Gospel and Thy grace) "they comfort me" (Ps. 23 v. 4).

Oh, may the Lord help us through the mazes of life, and all the tribulations on the way to the kingdom, to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace' at last! Yes, the headstone shall be brought forth "with shoutings, crying Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. 4 v. 7).

Amen.