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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel,
Brighton, Sunday morning, 29th August 1965.

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn and He will heal us; He hath smitten and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth".

Hosea 6 v 1-3.

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When we read the history of the children of Israel, and they are typical of the Lord's people, the record of their rebellion and idolatry and stiffneckness and murmurings, from the very time that they were brought out from Egyptian bondage, it is a wonder that the Lord did not long since cast them off for ever. In this prophecy of Hosea especially we have a record of the rebellion and idolatry of Ephraim and Israel, representatives of the Lord's people and also of God's long-suffering mercy and goodness to them. Now why is it that He did not cast off this people? There is only one reason, because of the Covenant of Grace. Therefore, the Lord says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man".

O what a mercy this is! A covenant God; therefore we read in Jeremiah, "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child, for since I spake against him" - and you will see in this prophecy what was spoken against Ephraim - "Since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still". These three verses are intimately connected with the concluding verse of the preceeding chapter: "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Saying, "Come and let us return unto the Lord" An exhortation to repentance. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed" and that backslidings sinners may return. "Return unto Me" says the Lord by Jeremiah, "For I am married unto you, only acknowledge thine iniquities". What a blessed grace is the grace of repentance. It is one of those essentials to salvation; one of those things that accompany salvation is repentance.

But where there is repentance there must have been a conviction of sin, and we cannot exaggerate the importance of this part of the work of the Holy Ghost. I am more and more persuaded that there is, for the lack of deep conviction of sin, that there is so much light and superficial religion about, I do indeed. If conviction makes deep, deep wounds in the heart and conscience, those wounds will never be healed by anything that is superficial, not by any innovations being brought in to make the services more bright. O my friends, may the Lord keep us to these main things. The work of the Holy Ghost. It is the only thing that will stand when we come to die.

"Come and let us return unto the Lord". On Friday, in considering the 80th Psalm, we were brought to the same point really. There the church was convinced of an evil condition, a desolate condition, a wilderness state. But they were brought to see that there was but one remedy. "Turn us again O Lord God of Hosts, cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved". Nothing else will meet the case and if we are taught of the Spirit and exercised in our hearts, we shall refuse every other remedy and say with Job, "Miserable comforters are ye all, and ye are physicians of no value". When that dear woman that had an issue of blood twelve years had tried every physician there was and she grew worse and worse rather than better, a good thing she did otherwise she would never have come to the Lord Jesus:

"Few, if any, come to Jesus,
'Till reduced to self despair."

Self despair is a good place, a great mercy to be brought to self despair. Self despair is the beginning of a good hope. We shall never

have a good hope through grace until we are brought to self despair, and it will bring us to the point, "Come and let us return unto the Lord". One of the judgements brought upon Ephraim was this, "Let him alone, he is joined to his idols," let him go after them, make him weak in smiting him, give him to be filled with his own case, give him to prove that all outside of Christ is nothing but death, destruction and despair. Then bring him to this, "Come and let us return unto the Lord". O the sweet relief of it. Some of you may be just in that position where your heart is smitten, convinced of your wanderings and backslidings. How that you have been taken up by some earthly interest and entangled in those things that do not profit, and you have proved that they do not profit, that you have forgotten the Lord days without number.

O how kind it is of the Lord to leave this word, "Come and let us return unto the Lord", to nobody else. In the 4th chapter of Jeremiah it commences, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me". It is no use to return to anything else, and your case may be so urgent and heavy that you will return to His word and to the throne of grace in the first place. You may have a library of some good books, full of spiritual matters; but have you not ever known such an exercise and weight of soul that you have had to leave every stream and come to the Fountain itself, and come to the word of God and to the throne of grace.

"Come and let us return unto the Lord". To seek Him, to seek His mercy is to return.

"Weary of wandering from the Lord,
And now made willing to return".

And I venture to say this, that there is not a single grace of the spirit that is not in exercise in a returning, repenting sinners heart. You consider it and see if you can find one single grace of the Spirit that is not there. There is faith, otherwise there would be no returning. The Prodigal had faith in his father, and in his father's house. There is hope; one in despair will never come and never return. There is love; Ephraim said, "When I was turned I smote upon my thigh". There was vehement love, love to the Lord, abhorrence of self. The tender fear of God is in this repentance, humility. "Come, let us return unto the Lord". Return to His fullness, return to His grace, return to the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. O you will be thankful for that opened fountain. It is a double cure; it is opened for two things, sin and uncleanness; that is the root of sin in our being, in our fallen nature, uncleanness is for our actual transgressions day by day, for we are sinners, we shall never be anything better than sinners while we are here and therefore, we shall need the Gospel, we shall need the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Mediator, the Substitute. "Come, let us return to the Fountain of living waters, "For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." I feel that there is mercy, wisdom, kindness, goodness in those Scriptures, that declare unto His people their transgressions. There is no small part of the love of God evidenced toward a sinner when he is reprov'd, rebuked, chastened and corrected, and when it has this effect, "Come and let us return unto the Lord". There is something very attractive to this. This very word is applied to a poor sinner, sinking under a sense and sight of himself who feels that he is under the dominion of sin; who feels that his hope is lost, he is cut off for his part. Who is walking in such darkness that he considers that he is a reprobate. This is the voice of the Lord. Not ink and paper, thousands can read this, but it is when the Spirit leads us, when it reaches our souls, "Come and let us return unto the" Redeemer. "Let Israel hope in the Lord", said David, and he said that when he was brought up from the depths, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. O Lord, if Thou shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that thou mayest be feared: Therefore let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy and with Him there is plenteous redemption," that is eternal redemption.

O what a word this is! What a Lord it is to return to. "Return unto the Lord" He delights in mercy, He has plenteous redemption. Not just enough. His righteousness does not just stretch over and cover

a sinner, it is everlasting righteousness. I know, I sadly know what it is to realise that one is as big a sinner as he is in being, and sometimes it feels to be bigger than that for the influence of sin is beyond ourselves. To realise that the dire contagion has filled our veins and spread the poison to the heart and that it is a malignant disease; for one under a real sense of sin to return unto the Lord and find there that there is plenteous redemption in His precious sin-atonement blood and there is infinite merit, that it can wash a sinner and make him whiter than the snow. "Come, let us return".

Peter says, "To whom can we go?" and you will be brought to that extremity, a blessed extremity:

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee".

"Come and let us return unto the Lord". To a Redeemer; to a just God and yet a Saviour; that is wonderful. May not sound very wonderful to some and feeling what we are we might almost expect, a just God and a destroyer, but He is a just God and a Saviour. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive them". Forgiveness through the Lamb of God. He is faithful and just and I would say this reverently, that if the Lord did not forgive His peoples sins as they confessed them, He would be unfaithful and unjust, I say that reverently, because of the Covenant of Grace. Because of His holy Word. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just". He is faithful to the covenant, faithful to His own undertakings; and that faithfulness and justice is in His Person, and therefore it brings us to this: "Come and let us return unto the Lord" a Substitute. Return to a Substitute. O my friends, we need to pause over these rich truths. What a substitute He is. None other could be found. Not Gabriel the archangel could be a substitute, he must be a man, and this is the Man, Christ Jesus, that Mediator between God and men the Man Christ Jesus.

He is a substitute in every sense of the word, He is a complete substitute in His incarnation. The sacred sinless body He took into union with His divine Person. That body, that sinless, holy human nature is a substitute for His people who were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. "Come let us return" unto a Substitute.

Ah, these things are unspeakable. In everything concerning His people the Lord Jesus is a substitute. His sacred body was sinless because it was born of the Holy Ghost, conceived by the Holy Ghost. Every action was pure, guile was never found in His sacred lips. He rendered perfection and complete obedience to the law of God, satisfied that law, went to the very end of it, exhausted it in obeying it and made it honourable, not for Himself but for His unworthy people. He was a substitute in His sufferings. His sufferings for His people were in exact proportion as they deserve to suffer in hell. Do you believe it? Have you ever come to Him? Have you ever returned to Him?

"O come, let us return unto the Lord". And you will return unto Him as a Mediator. How can you pray without a mediator? He is everything. He is the Mediator between God and men. He is the great High Priest who offered Himself without spot unto God. He is the sacrifice that was offered: "Not the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer, but by His own blood He entered into heaven itself". He is the High Priest, the Sacrifice, and He is also the altar. "Come let us return unto the Lord". O how it draws a poor unworthy, self-condemned and self-destroyed sinner to see Him. He is seeable by faith, and as you return to Him as a Mediator, O at the throne of grace, when you have access unto God through Him. "Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us". O His goodness in tearing His people. You look through this prophecy and see how He tore His people to pieces, how He dealt with them. "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal", and this belongs only to His people.

"He hath torn and He will heal us, He hath smitten and He will bind us up." How can He do it? Read the 53rd Isaiah and you will see the blessed secret of it. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of

our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed". If it were not for this, my friends, this tearing and this smiting would be for ever. "But He will turn again, He will have mercy upon us" said Micah. O what a sight he had of this glorious Lord! "Who is a God like unto Thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. He retaineth not His anger for ever because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us, He will subdue our iniquities and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". How is it that He can pass by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage? There is only one reason, it is because the sword of divine justice did not pass by Him. "Awake O sword, smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn my hand upon the little ones". If that sword of divine justice had not smitten the blessed, sacred, substitute, He would never have passed by our transgressions.

"Let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn, but He will heal us". O that most sacred chapter, the 53rd Isaiah enters into this. There you see the Substitute. To read the 51st Psalm in conjunction with the 53rd Isaiah you will get the two sides. There you will get a returning, repenting, trembling, broken hearted sinner and in Isaiah you will get this divine compassion of the Redeemer. Those of you who are mourning, smarting under a sense of sin and guilt, I could commend to you the 51st Psalm and the 53rd Isaiah, and if the Lord would make over in your heart that blessed Redeemer in a suffering Saviour, O how it would fill your heart.

"Love and grief compound an unction,
Both to cleanse the soul and heal".

"Surely He hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted". This is the Substitute. This is love, love divine. This is the love of God. He did not spare His Son from these sufferings, from this wounding, from this chastening, from this smiting, and that out of love to His unworthy people.

"Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn and He will heal us, He hath smitten and He will bind us up". You see what hope there is in a repenting sinner, there is faith to view in the fullness of Christ a greater reason for hope than a sinner sees in Himself for despair, and that is a wonderful sight, that will keep us from sinking. "He will heal us". He has healing medicine, there is a balm in Gilead. His precious blood is healing, cleansing and healing. "He sent His word and healed them". What is the word of God to any but to sinners who need it? The whole need not a physician but he that is sick. And you get the two characters in the religious world, you get those that are whole, that have no disease, they are not lepers, they need not a physician; but there are sin-sick souls, lepers, those who have in their loins a loathsome disease, and this gets honour and glory and magnifies the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the merit and virtue of His sin-atonement blood". This brings sinners to God, it is in such a way that the Lord Jesus has glorified the Father on the earth; has vindicated His justice and His holiness and His glory by condescending to wretchedness and dust, by condescending to ignominy and shame and spitting, by condescending to become sin that sinners may be made righteous. This is the healing, the Gospel.

"Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn and He will heal, He hath smitten". Some of you may be under that solemn dealing, being torn to pieces and smitten in your soul and sometimes the Lord uses circumstances and providence for this end. It is just this, that He says in His dealings with His people, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price". We would be our own if we could; but if we are in the covenant of grace, blessed be God, we cannot be our own, and therefore, in smiting His people it ~~has~~ is as though He overturns. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and give it to him whose right it is". What a great thing if it should prove that we are Christ's right, that we belong to Him by the gift of the

Father, and if we prove to be His by His conquering grace, and His by purchase with His precious blood, He will overturn everything that is against Him, He will gird His sword upon His thigh and smite and tear through a sinners heart and destroy what is not His own, what then? He will heal us, He will bind us up with His blessed Gospel. Have not some of you found this healing? Have you not sat in a chapel at times, wounded in your conscience? Have you ever felt the sweetness of His mercy, the Spirit of His grace?

"After two days will He revive us, in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight". In the most profound sense this truth refers to the union that His people have with Christ in the covenant of grace.

"One in the tomb, One when He rose,
One when He triumphed o'er His foes".

The Gospel, salvation, the kingdom of God enters within the veil, it goes beyond the grave. What a good word this is for poor dying sinners. The Apostle writing to the Corinthians says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures". And in the first place, doubtless, this refers to the union that subsists with His people in Christ, both in His death and His resurrection. Wonderful, vital, is union with Christ. If we have no union with Him we have no spiritual existence. If we have no union with Him we receive nothing from Him. If we have no union with Him then we have no part or lot in the matter of salvation. "But after two days will He revive us, the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight", and that was accomplished at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

It is a most amazing word in the 2nd chapter of the Ephesians, "Who hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". These things are spoken, not for angels, but for sinful men."

Amen.

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