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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Sunday morning, 16th June 1968

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Isaiah 57 v.15.

It is very evident that in this text there are two extreme opposites. Isaiah, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is lifting up the Lord as high as he can lift Him, and that for the comfort of those that are low. It is amazing that these two can meet. We have it in a very simple and yet blessed truth: "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them". So this high and lofty One speaks. We have sometimes reminded you that the Word of God is the mouth of God. It speaks; He speaks through His Word. He does not speak to the beasts of the earth, He does not speak to angels, he speaks to men. "Unto you, O man, I call"; and therefore He speaks to us. He speaks to His people in a different way from how He speaks to others. "O blessed is the man that heareth Me", Me, "watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors, whoso findeth Me, findeth life, and obtaineth favour of the Lord".

O this mighty ME; and as He is revealed to us and as we are given faith by the Spirit to meditate upon Him, He gets bigger and bigger, until we begin to understand His own declaration: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord", and there are times when faith sees Him to fill heaven and earth, there is such an attraction to Him that you pray Him to fill you. To fill your heart, to fill your life, to fill your troubles, to fill your afflictions and infirmities, to fill everything. To be all and in all. So this mighty One, He speaks. He speaks in the text: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity". He cannot inhabit anything less than eternity for His Being is infinite, cannot be contained, high and lofty One, the self existing Jehovah whose being is underived, incomprehensible, O how great a God He is!

We could not speak of Him unless He had been pleased to reveal Himself in Holy Scripture. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity". So He is the eternal God and as we are given to realise that we have immortal souls and that we have eternity before us there is nothing adequate to meet eternity other than or less than this eternal God. It will be a comfort too, as we have been singing:

"To comprehend the great Three One
Is more than highest angels can".

But faith believes that He is. Not a mere speculation, but faith believes that He is by His own revelation. Faith believes what reason cannot understand. Do you know that feeling? It is a peculiar experience, to believe by faith in the infinite God which you can never understand; and have you ever known what it is to be thankful that you can never understand Him? O God is very great, but just to see Him as the incomprehensible God would be no profit to us, and yet if we have a view of Him by faith as He is revealed in His dear Son, it will be a strength, a strength to us, look at everything else. I have sometimes thought that the declaration of His infinite Being, His omnipotence, His divine sovereignty that we have in the 40th chapter is wonderful. How there He repeatedly challenges men, "to whom then will ye liken Me or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One? He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. Then He speaks of His sovereignty: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel when He created all that is? With whom took He counsel? Who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of judgement? and so He

makes this challenge: "To whom then will ye liken Me, God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" and so He speaks, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.

A sight of Him my friends, will put everything in its right place; we shall see the world as God sees it. In the 40th chapter again, there the Prophet compares men with grass, "Surely the people is grass, and the voice said cry, and he said, what shall I cry", and then there is a reference to the mighty One in the text, "Lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God!". To behold Him. The hymnwriters were under the blessed influence of the Spirit:

"Had I a glimpse of Thee, O God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon".

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity". O what a sinful speck we feel ourselves to be, what less than nothingness we are, and that is not the worst, I believe I have felt that, not only less than nothing but worse than nothing. A worm of the earth. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy". Holiness is His perfection. He has no attributes really. All His attributes are what He is. He is holy and it does make that expression very blessed, speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Holy One of Israel, so that the holiness of this great God is in the Lord Jesus, as the fulness of the Godhead is in Him bodily and a part of His fulness is the fulness of the holiness of God and therefore, He becomes the holiness of His people, the righteousness of His people.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One". It is amazing that poor sinners whose sinful insignificance we cannot express, yet can venture near to this high and lofty One. O I feel that Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, or rather David when he was preparing for it, he expressed this truth of the text, it says there: and he speaks of Him in all His greatness, "Thine O Lord, is the greatness, and the glory and the majesty and the kingdom, all is Thine and of Thine have we given Thee". He traces the whole up to this glorious God and so in the 40th Isaiah for the comfort of the people, the greatness of this God is proposed for their comfort in the midst of their trials. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and earth fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." That is the Person in the text. O when He is exalted, when the Holy Ghost reveals Him as we have said, everything falls into its right place.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy". We shall tremble at His holiness, if we are made to know a little of our own pollution, our own unholiness. You just look at the contrast, look at David, he said, "My sins like a heavy burden are too heavy for me, my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness, my loins are filled with a loathsome disease", said that man of God, that sweet Psalmist. Here is a Holy God and a polluted sinner can approach Him through the Mediator, and as we read of this high and lofty and eternal and holy One, we would not wish Him less. I know a sight of self at the same time as a sight of Him will make you tremble, but I believe it is known that when a singer has a sight of Him in the Person of Jesus Christ, he trembles and rejoices.

"Whose name is Holy". Therefore we are exhorted by Paul, to the Colossians; "Be ye holy for He is holy, and without holiness no man can see the Lord". In the last chapter of this Prophecy we have a similar text. "To this man will I look, and with him will I dwell, that is of a humble spirit and that trembles at my word". O it is amercy to tremble at the Word of God, and there are two things, among others, that will make you tremble. One is, what He has to say to the wicked, the terrible examples we have before us of apostates, the case of Saul, of Judas, Ahithophel, we shall not take it for granted that that is not our case, it will cause us to tremble. Another:

cause for trembling is a sense of the majesty, the highness, the loftiness, the glory, the justice, the majesty of God, and another thing that will make us to tremble is a sight and sense of what we are, and yet here is the text. These two meet. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place", and it is amazing how unworthy sinners can and do according to the Scriptures, look up to this high and holy place. "Look down from heaven, from the height of Thy sanctuary, hear the groaning of the prisoner and loose those that are appointed unto death". "I dwell in the high and holy place", and then immediately the text changes and drops down from the height of heaven to a poor sinner. It is a mystery. Paul prayed it might be so for the Ephesians. He prayed that the Lord might dwell in their hearts by faith, and the mystery is, "Christ in you the hope of glory". "I dwell in the high and holy place..with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit".

This contrition and humility is not the development of some natural faculty at all. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is a great work to reduce a rebellious stiff-necked sinner, and make him contrite and humble in spirit, and that accounts for a good deal of the Lord's chastenings, it needs much to break a hard heart, it needs much to kill enmity. You can do nothing with enmity unless it is killed, you can never cure it, and therefore, it is no small mercy that the Lord has "ascended on high. led captivity captive, received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also".

"With him also that is of a contrite spirit, a contrite and humble spirit. We read at the prayer meeting the 51st Psalm, and there you see a real description of a broken and contrite and humble spirit. It was produced in David by conviction of sin, and there will never be a contrite and humble and broken spirit without it. Conviction of sin is most important. I feel perhaps we do not speak sufficiently of conviction and repentance. They are two things that accompany salvation, and if they are not in our religion our religion is no good at all. Conviction of sin. We may know sin in our general judgement, we may have a kind of superficial feeling of sin in ourselves, we may go into the prisons and see their convicts and see sin. We see sin as we read the daily newspaper in all its terrible effects and consequences, but that is not to know it. You will never have conviction by looking at sins outside of yourself, and so Paul says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves", right in ourselves, and if one is sentenced to death in a condemned cell, that sentence will be in his own person and we shall be brought to a conviction of sin as though we were responsible for all the sin in the world. I would not speak a word wrongly if I could help it, but to know by divine teaching and the penetrating action of the law what we sing, is very solemn:

"Here Lord my soul convicted stands,
Of breaking all Thy ten commands".

Easy to sing, easy to read but O to have by the Holy Spirit a deep conviction of sin by which we see and feel the ruin of the body, the ruin of the soul, the ruin of the mind and lie before Him prostrate in the dust. That is one way by which He produces a contrite and humble spirit. You will never have it without it, and then also in His dealings with His people, He will humble them, bring them into a tender, meek spirit of humility, turn their beauty into corruption, their wisdom into ignorance, their strength into weakness. Has the Lord done that for you? We are speaking of spiritual things, not natural things, we need natural strength, we need natural wisdom for those things that pertain to this life, and to this world and for our duties, but we are speaking now of spiritual experience, and the Lord will empty and strip a sinner of all that he thinks he has. If he thinks he is rich, the Lord will make him poor, and turn wisdom into ignorance, so that he has nothing to glory in, nothing to boast in, and the language of the Scripture will become his own language, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory".

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place", and there will be an attraction to that high and holy place. You take the 63rd chapter of this Prophecy, and see this poor sinner looking up to heaven. "Look down from heaven and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and Thy glory, where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and Thy mercies toward me, are they restrained?" It seems almost to be insulting for an unworthy sinner to look up to heaven and ask this high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity to look down from heaven and to ask Him, "Where is Thy zeal and where is Thy strength?" but O faith is reverently made at times, and it honours the Lord, but you will never thus go to Him unless you know Him and if you know Him you will have been taught what you are in yourself, and a sense of your deep need because of what you are, of your ruin, of your sin, of your pollution, your ignorance. It will make His fulness of wisdom and grace and life and righteousness and holiness and merit so attractive to you; and to see in this text that these two things meet. Here and there we have it in the Scriptures in very solemn and blessed language, you see these two things meet in the 102nd Psalm. "His high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, who dwells in the high and holy place, "He regardeth the prayer of the destitute". The destitute. Here is a full, glorious Christ, Holy, Holy, Holy, regarding the prayer of a poor destitute sinner. Do you know these things in the exercise of your soul?

"With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit. Well we know painfully from experience that it is not of nature, and when one is called by grace and born again there will be this contrite heart, and humble spirit, but we shall prove that regeneration is not mere reformation, the old man is not reformed. No, but the Canaanites still dwell in the land. We shall still know what it is to backslide, to rebel against God, as we were trying to speak lately, and then the Lord speaks to such a backsliding sinner. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?". So that we shall have many many changes, but the mercy is that this high and lofty One is immutable, and it is because He is immutable that we are not consumed. All the glory is His, we change, He does not. We are constantly sinning, He is the glorious Redeemer, His love is immutable, His power omniscient, His purposes are sovereign and therefore He constitutes a Refuge, a Rock into which hope anchors.

"With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit". It is a very sacred experience to be contrite and humble. Often we are brought by our own pride and our own rebellion and independence of God into a hardened place, for the rebellious dwell in a dry land, and then, when it is discovered to us we find that we cannot break our own hard hearts. Some of you may have known what it is to be so rebellious, you felt really ill with rebellion and knew it. But O have you not known when the Lord has melted you down? When you have wondered to feel your own hardness depart.. When perhaps through pride you were determined to alter your position, to improve yourself, and determined to break through a hedge whether it was the will of God or not, and then the Lord has broken in and shown you that if you had your own way you would go to destruction and destroy yourself, and perhaps reminded you of some sweet visit when you were in a state of adversity and it may be poverty. Or you may be passing through many many trials, things may be withered up, your business all decaying and you feel determined to get out of it, but the Lord comes and reminds you of what He has done, taken you aside and given you to know that He remembers the days of your youth, and how that He has spoken to you in times past, delivered you from many many trials, brought you up from many depths, and He breaks your heart.

"With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble". We need reviving. David did, and he got it. He said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He restoreth my soul". "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" "To revive the spirit of the humble". But you cannot revive nothing, you cannot restore nothing. There must be

something there to revive and it may be that in the midst of all your desolation and many fears, as you are covered with sackcloth and shame that everything is covered up, but in answer to David's prayer, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation", the Lord will revive you. What a sweet surprise it is; when perhaps you felt that your religion was just dying out, prayer was fading away. Everything seemed flat, and heavy and lifeless, and then for the Lord to come sovereignly, as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, you cannot command it, but it comes sometimes like dew upon your branch and there is a very sacred and peculiar anticipation in your soul by the refreshing of His presence. It may be by a word, it may be by no word at all. I remember, though I do not want to speak of myself, but some of you do not know the condition at times that a minister comes into the pulpit with, we each know our own infirmities, the pains in my head and a bad memory, it is a wonder that I have ever got so far as I have, but I remember on one occasion, all I had to come to the pulpit with was a headache and a rebellious heart, but I opened the Word of God on that text: "My springs are all in thee", It produced what was in the text in a second, everything flowed down, the mountains flowed down, there was unfolded before one those springs, those streams from the river of God, showing in Him a sufficiency for time and for eternity.

You may depend upon it my friends, that real vital religion is an experience, you must go through it, and you must go through the gates. "I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"; and this reviving is by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, the divine compassion of the Lord. He looks down upon His dear people, very sacred. Sometimes He revives His people in reading the Word. Why that is one of the great uses of the Scriptures, to maintain the life that He gives, to maintain the power of faith. Have you not ever been revived in your heart, been revived in reading the word of God? Sometimes He will revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite ones under the preaching of the Gospel. O the different conditions in which you may come to the house of God and the influences of those things that you have left behind, the driving, weakening, sickening thoughts and many many fears and yet, when you come into the Sanctuary, as did Asaph, the Lord shows you that He is unchangeable, that all changes are in you, and shows you that He is immutable and His divine faithfulness, is great, and it is a Rock, and you realise that the Rock does not move upon which you are fixed, and therefore you are able to "Be still and know that He is God", and you find your faith nourished; your hope strengthened and the joys of salvation are revived and restored.

"To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite one". There is another thing also, we were speaking lately of the communion of saints and how good it is to feel that love and union and fellowship with the Lords people as we visit them from time to time and are made useful to them, to comfort those that mourn, and to revive the heart of the humble. It is very blessed when communion of saints has this effect. Then we know how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It has a reviving, a refreshing, a strengthening influence by the Spirit of the Lord and His gracious presence, and you see His compassion in the next verse too, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth" and you felt He would, Asaph feared that everything was gone, His mercy was gone, His compassion was gone, His favour was gone, but he made a mistake. "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made". So He knows just what you can bear, He is a God of judgement, and He judges each individual case of His people. He knows when to administer a tonic, He knows when to administer some chastening, His rod, He knows when to give comfort. He knows when to cause His face to shine, He knows when it is best to bring you into darkness, and all these things are for the life of the spirit. So that while we are here, we shall sink and rise, sink and rise, but the promise is that grace, grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life".