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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Sunday morning, 30th May 1965.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." Isaiah 61:1-2.

With regard to this text, it will be to no purpose unless there is present here this great Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it will be to no purpose unless there are those here that are meek and broken-hearted and captives and prisoners and mourners. We must have those present if this word is to be of any profit.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me" said the Lord Jesus. This He speaks in His mediatorial position. His matchless condescension in the work of redemption, and in His intercession, is very blessed. He received the Spirit without measure. The Lord Jesus, who as the eternal Son of God, could not be anointed, He was God Himself who anoints. But O what a perfect Mediator, what a perfect Substitute He condescended to become! "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me." And He speaks of this as He is the Head of the Church, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. He is the Head, He has the fullness, the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of life, the fullness of wisdom, and of grace, and of merit; the fullness of power, the fullness of unsearchable riches, the fullness of love. This is the Person that preaches the fullness of ability. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach;" and as the Head of the Church He is the Head of the ministry. It is the most important office in the Church of God. Not that a minister is the most important person; speaking for myself, it is very much otherwise. But the office itself is to be magnified. The Lord has ordained it, and He has connected the preaching of the Gospel with the salvation of His people. It is His sovereign method; it need not have been so. The Lord taught Nicodemus Himself; He taught Zacchaeus. He could have taught His people by the Spirit without the preaching of the Gospel; but it has pleased Him, through the foolishness of preaching, to save those that believe, and if we realise this, it will make the services exceedingly sacred and important; and it may be an incentive to prayer and exercise in going to a service. Because, as the Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church and of the ministry, this anointing with which He was immeasurably anointed is the anointing which descends upon the ministers of the Gospel, if they are ordained of God to preach. This is the unction of the Holy One that teacheth of all things – and not only so; this same anointing is upon His people. You will never hear to profit without this same blessed Spirit. O the importance of the Holy Ghost! the importance of His work in the heart! the importance of the commencement of that work in regeneration to quicken His people who are dead in trespasses and in sins! O the importance of this anointing in the preaching of the Gospel, without which the Word will have no power.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me" – the blessed Head – and He is the Head now, a living Head in heaven. When He finished His work, He was not finished with the Church. He carries on now in heaven that work of intercession. The Holy Ghost communicates from that glorious Head to the

members here below. It is by His life that they live, by His light that they see, by His grace that they are saved. O to have a knowledge of this ascended, exalted and glorious Head, and for the Spirit to bear witness in our hearts that we are, if but the least, a member of His mystical body! For as the highest and smallest twig of a mighty oak is maintained from the same root as the largest member, so the weakest and smallest saint is maintained from the same blessed Head; for "to Him the weakest is dear as the strong." (804)

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." Good tidings – not to the world; if you want to preach good tidings to the world, you must send them to the Stock Exchange, or to the Sports Arena, or send them to the amusements and pleasures of this world. We would have this chapel filled to overflowing with the world, if we could tell them where they could better invest their money, and make more of it.

"Because the Lord bath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." It is good tidings from heaven of the Gospel; and this brings us to consider the need of it. The fall of man is to be preached. It will be a very conspicuous part in experience where the Holy Spirit is teaching a sinner. The fall of man, as we are involved in it, and as we are convinced of it, will make us suitable to receive these good tidings. When man fell, he fell and was completely wrecked and ruined. It left nothing whole; it broke every bone; and each in their measure will know it, will know what it is to be lost. I believe that the want of this is the reason why there is so much superficial and formal religion. But if ever you have been brought to ruin, and really lost in yourself, that superficiality and social religion and cheerful religion will be nauseous to you. Attractive it is to itching ears, but to a ruined sinner, O how sweet, how glorious, how attractive is the Gospel! We might well ask ourselves as to whether we have been brought into a condition suitable for salvation; that is, whether we have been lost and ruined in the fall. It is more than notion, and it will increase as we go on in life. I believe in the early days there is conviction of sin, much exercise; but O as one gets older, and is led more deeply into what self is, and what a body of sin and death is, what our nature in all its pollution is! If we grow in grace, we grow in a knowledge of the mystery of iniquity; but in the same proportion, we shall grow in a knowledge of the mystery of redemption, the mystery of Christ – and it is a mystery. And that is why the world knows nothing of it. You cannot learn a mystery, you cannot unravel a mystery. As we said somewhere lately, there is a difference and a very important distinction between a difficulty and a mystery. Godliness is not difficult, it is mysterious; and for a thing to be a mystery it must be revealed; and therefore we need to have revealed to us what we are, and that will bring us to this meekness.

"Because the Lord has appointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." This is spiritual meekness. Naturally we are just the opposite. We are full of pride, self confidence, full of enmity against God: "will not have that Man to reign over us." But when the Holy Spirit deals with us He turns our beauty into corruption; our righteousnesses then become filthy rags, our wisdom is turned into ignorance, our strength into weakness, and we lie prostrate in the dust in meekness, willing to be disposed of according to God's will, willing to be saved in God's way, to be saved by free and sovereign grace.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord bath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." This is a very sweet character. I wish I could live in it – no retaliation. The Lord was

meek and lowly in heart; when He was reviled, He reviled not again. O how objectionable is the opposite to this meekness, especially in religion! An irreverent boldness, self-assertion, to be self-opinionated in religion; it is most distasteful. It is a mercy then to be made spiritually meek. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

"He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." These are spiritual experiences. There are plenty of natural people who are brokenhearted, and we would be kind to them. I really feel that I could be kind to every poor brokenhearted person. But this is different, this is spiritually brokenhearted. David shows it in the 51st Psalm. O how brokenhearted he was on account of his sin! He could not leave his sin alone in that Psalm; he kept bringing it up before the Lord in different ways, seeing it from different angles. But he concluded with this: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (v.17) In this brokenheartedness there is repentance, sweet bitter repentance. I feel that that word in the 2nd Corinthians will show what a broken heart is: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner...For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of...For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all these things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." (ch.7:9-11) That is a broken heart; and when you get such a definition of it, and look within in your experience, have you ever had it, ever had that repentance wrought? If you have, it is a gift from heaven. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31) He will always give the two; He will never give repentance without forgiveness. Him He hath highly exalted, this blessed One in the text; and therefore He could preach, He could bind up the brokenhearted. So that a brokenhearted sinner is a repenting sinner – brokenhearted for sin. And what will break the heart? A view of sin – not in itself, it won't – but a view of a suffering Saviour will. If you put together the 51st Psalm and the 53rd Isaiah, you will see what will make a broken heart. "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He in whose lips no guile was found. "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." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" – His beloved Father, whom He loved – "hath put Him to grief." But He binds up the brokenhearted.

How does He bind them up? He binds them up with His love; He binds them up with the Gospel. He binds them up as did that good Samaritan, he found a man that was suitable for the Gospel. There is the condition. He went down from Jerusalem to Jericho – was going in the wrong direction, he was not going from Jericho to Jerusalem – and he fell among thieves, he was wounded, robbed, and left half-dead. And we shall know what that is. Have you ever been there in your soul? But the Lord Jesus, the good Samaritan, came where he was, and bound up his wounds and poured in the oil and wine, sat him upon his own beast, and took him to an inn. O that is the blessed Gospel! You may depend upon it; it was good news to that poor man when this Samaritan came to him. We shall be brought to hopelessness and despair and helplessness in ourselves, and to look from that condition to this glorious One, and the provision that is made, especially for, exclusively on the behalf of, the worst of sinners.

"He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." Sometimes He binds up the brokenhearted with His word: "He sent His word, and healed them." (Psalm 107:20) Have you ever found the balm of Gilead, ever found the word of God to come into your heart, full of grief and brokenness on account of sin –

*My grief, my burden long has been,
Because I could not cease from sin.* (Gadsby's 144)

– and the Holy Spirit has brought some word of Scripture into your heart? It may be that Scripture in 1 Timothy which contains in it the whole Gospel: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief." (ch.1:15) I remember on one occasion standing looking out of a window at Ninfield, and had to preach there that night, and felt that my sins were such that I was unfit for the company of the Lord's people, to say nothing about going into a pulpit. I could see and feel nothing but sin, nothing beyond it, and it came into my heart – just sense of that truth: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) I realised that the whole of Christ, all the love of God manifested in Him, and the whole of the Gospel from beginning to end, had respect to nobody else but to the chief of sinners. It will bind up the broken heart. The love of God in Christ, when it reaches your soul –

*But what can poor lost sinners say,
When once they get a view;
And hear the blessed Spirit say,
'All this was done for you.'* (Gadsby's 680)

"Because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." And there is a brokenheartedness subsequently too. Have not any of you been broken-hearted at the Lord's absence? When He has hidden His face, when He has appeared to frown upon your sin, when He is silent, when you have felt that He has gone out against you, and put you away in anger? O that will break your heart! The Church in Solomon's Song who was in a backsliding, slothful, lukewarm condition upon her bed, yet the Lord came and put in His hand by the hole of the door; He knocked at the door; she arose, but He had gone. "I sought Him, but I could not find Him." (ch.5:6) If you can live comfortably without the presence of the Lord, I can say this, you have never known what His presence is. O it is important to remember continually that vital godliness is an experience; and in reading the Word of God, you realise that everything you read is to be an experience if it is to be made profitable – "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives." And the Lord Jesus only can do this, because it is He who hath led captivity captive. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive." (Psalm 68:18) Therefore He can loose His prisoners, and give liberty to captives.

These two things are the same thing in different language: "To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." The first way in which the Lord does liberate captives is when He delivers them from the power of Satan, the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His dear Son. I like to think of the beginning, if we can drop upon that first liberating power that is spoken of in the Word of God; for in substance He does this to everyone of His people. The Lord says in the 3rd chapter of Exodus: "I have surely seen the affliction of my

people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land unto a good land and large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." (v.7-8) What a deliverance from Egyptian bondage! And His people are there, in there unregeneracy, under the power and servitude of the god of this world; but they are brought to feel it, and they are brought to groan under it. And the Lord knows it, looks down from heaven, and "I am come down to deliver them." That is what He condescended to come in human flesh for, to deliver His captives; otherwise there would have been no deliverance. There had to be a ransom found in order to obtain deliverance from that captivity.

"To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." O this is what I desire and pray will be made manifest among us as a people. This is the work of God. "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants." (Psalm 90:16) And this is made part of this work: "To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." And when one is brought to know that they are captives, taken captive by the devil at his will, it is the law of God that shows them their servitude, their captivity, their bondage, and their death. But in the case of the Lord's people, the way of the law is different from what it is in the wicked; not a different law, but with respect to His people the law is made a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. It is not the law that gives them liberty, but it is made a schoolmaster and a teacher in this way, that it so shows them their captivity, shows them the prison walls, shows them the chains by which they are bound, gives them to realise that the justice of the law cannot liberate them, cannot give them life, cannot show them any compassion, until they are brought by the Holy Spirit to see one door of hope, and that is the door of mercy.

I do feel upon this point, that the apostle Paul's experience in the conclusion of the 7th Romans is a very blessed interpretation. There Paul shows how he was in captivity, and yet he thought he was alive without the law. He was, he was not in captivity experimentally. An unregenerate man in the world thinks he has liberty, he thinks the world is his, and all the pleasures and the wealth and all the attainments, none more at liberty than he. But when the law comes and convinces him of sin, shows him that instead of liberty he is bound under the chain of sin in the bond of iniquity, then what a mercy it is when the same blessed Spirit, as in Paul's case, so far as himself was concerned, looking at his prison, looking at the bonds, he was under the law, he was seemingly a wretched man – nothing better – and he had no remedy for his wretchedness. But "Who shall deliver me" – who shall give me liberty – "from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (v.24-25)

"To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." And so in Zechariah we hear the same good news: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." (ch.9:12) My friends, as sure as the Holy Ghost convinces a sinner of what he is, and where he is in the bonds of iniquity, under the power of sin and Satan, under the holy law of God, he will never be left there, but he will be a "prisoner of hope." And I feel warranted to say this, although perhaps some feel otherwise, but to receive the sentence of death in ourselves we need faith. Some think that you have no faith until you are brought into the liberty of the Gospel, but I feel persuaded that there is nothing in a natural man that will receive the sentence of death in himself, so as to not trust in himself, but in God that raiseth the dead, unless there is a living faith. But living faith in that

prison, in that captivity, will labour; and O how suitable is that divine voice: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

So that the Gospel is made a perfect law of liberty. O the perfection of it is in Christ. Everything in the Gospel is Christ. It not only comes from Him, it is Christ; it is His Person, His fullness, the benefit and effect of His finished work. It partakes of His merit, of His life, and it is a perfect law of liberty. Everything in it liberates. It liberates a bankrupt by paying his debt. It liberates a sinner, as He was made sin for that sinner. It liberates one from the power of darkness, for "In Him is no darkness at all." "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

"He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." But there is this, my friends, there are subsequent prisons and captivities; we know them all the way through our experience. When the Lord delivers His people from the captivity of sin and Satan, it is not the last captivity they know, it is not the last prison that they get into. O what prisons some of us, some of you, have been in and shut up! You look at the 142nd Psalm, a most expressive Psalm, full of consolation to those that are in captivity and prisons in their souls, who are walking in darkness and have no light. O how low some of the Lord's people have sunk! And who but He can preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound? Who but He can give this liberty? "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name." (v.7) We shall know many prisons, be brought into many captivities in our journey; and we shall realise this too, that none but the Lord Himself can bring us out. The whole of the Word of God – and it may be particularly the Psalms – shows this most beautifully. O you look at the ins and outs, the ups and downs, the sinkings and risings, the sorrows and joys of David. But "God is His own interpreter."

"To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." It is proclamation. He proclaims liberty, He preaches good tidings, He proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. And He proclaims that acceptability in a poor sinner, who feels unfit for the company of His people, who may feel utterly unfit to pray, unfit to come to a service; the Lord proclaims the acceptability of Christ – for this acceptable year is not a year of 365 days, it is a period – and this acceptable year was the time of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world, through which time He finished His work that His Father gave Him to do, in which time He fulfilled the whole law of God. It was an acceptable time; it is due time, when God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law; and everything in that time was acceptable, He was acceptable, well-pleasing to His dear Father. His human nature, sinless, impeccable, was acceptable, was acceptable as a Substitute, acceptable as a Redeemer, as a Mediator. His work was acceptable because it partook of His Person; it was acceptable because it was perfect. His sufferings were acceptable; His blessed death was a sin-atonement; His sacrifice was acceptable to God. And when this is proclaimed in the heart of a poor sinner, then he has the witness of the Spirit that he is "accepted in the Beloved." O what a Gospel this is! Who needs it? Sinners, sinners!

Well, it is a mercy if the Gospel is good news to you. O to have the pleasures and profits and attainments and wisdom of this world proclaimed, and to be good news to you, would be very solemn. But O, have you a place made in your heart that makes Christ precious, and the Gospel good news from heaven? Amen.