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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel Brighton,
Sunday morning 12th November 1967

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people".

Isaiah 62 v.10

This is a commandment given to every minister commissioned to preach the Gospel, and what a solemn responsibility it is. It gets heavier as time goes on. Not easy to commence, much more difficult to continue. "Go through, go through the gates". A minister is an undershepherd, a guide to lead the people experimentally in their souls through the wilderness to heaven. Very solemn undertaking. Moses felt it to be so. He said to the Lord: "Consider that this nation is Thy people", that is what made it so heavy a responsibility to Moses. He was not the head of a political party concerned with national affairs, but "This is Thy people", and "If Thy presence go not with us carry us not up hence".

But here is the command, "Go through, go through the gates". There is but one gate really which is the same thing as the door: "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in he shall go in and out and find pasture", but here there are gates. "Go through, go through the gates. The thing is this, that a gate is an entrance and the exhortation here is not to stop short, it does not say go to the gate, go to the gate, but "Go through" them. That word of the Lord Jesus interprets this, when one asked Him saying, "Are there many to be saved? He said unto him, strive to enter in at the straight gate", and anything less than going through, anything less than entering in will leave us short.

"Go through, go through the gates"; and as the main gate, the door is the Lord Jesus Christ, so there are gates that lead unto Him. Very similar to that in the 35th Isaiah. "A highway shall be there and a way" That highway is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The way is the way of experience and the leadings of the Holy Ghost that direct a sinner to the highway, and so here we have the main gate, but there are the gates that lead to the Door, and we would speak of one or two of these gates through which we must pass if we ever enter into the City. Finally, as the Word of God concludes, finally this text will be fulfilled according to this Scripture: "Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in, through the gates, into the city", into heaven.

But there are other entrances into the City of Zion here below, and as enabled we would speak of some of these gates through which we must pass, they are things which accompany salvation, things which are essential to salvation. So that the first gate we would mention is regeneration. "Ye must be born again", if we never enter through this gate, we shall never enter into the city at all. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. O what an important entrance this is, to be born again, and you will be brought to realise that nothing less than a new creation, a new birth is adequate. Have you ever felt that with respect to your own case? Your own soul? Have you had such a discovery of the leprousy that is in you that from the soul of the feet to the crown of the head you are nought but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores and that nothing can alter that condition except a new creation, a new beginning, a new creature. O how important it is to go through, to go through this gate. To talk about it is not to go through it, to read it in the Word of God is not to go through it. It is the work of the Holy Ghost. It is called an incorruptible seed, You are born not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, and if we have not this initial to vital godliness, then all our religion is in vain, indeed

it is dead.

"Go through, go through the gates". Peter speaks to the same purpose where he says, "Giving all diligence, make your calling and election sure". Now that is to go through the gate. "Make your calling and election sure". But how? How are we to go through this gate of regeneration? It is the work of the Holy Ghost. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof but can'st not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of God". It is when the Holy Ghost quickens a soul into life, and to go through is to be made a subject of it. It cometh not with observation. It is the kingdom of God that comes when one is born again. It comes not with observation, not with outside show, but there are the effects of it, and the affects of being born again spiritually are illustrated by a natural birth. It is the beginning of experience. All the religion that we have, even if it is correct, before we have the life of God in our soul, is notion, acquisition. But when one is born again experience begins. Begin to breathe, cry hunger, thirst, a new light shines, a new Object is set before us. To go through then, is to experience the affects of being born again.

"Go through, go through the gates". Another gate is repentance. This is essential to salvation. It is an essential part of the work of the Holy Ghost, and how do we go through this gate? It is by conviction. The application of the law of God to the conscience. The law is a wonderful light, a penetrating light, it discovers everything that is wrong, it discovers death, it discovers corruption, indeed it turns comeliness into corruption and beauty into filthy rags. It is the Holy Ghost bringing a sinner to a knowledge of Himself. It is a wonderful teaching and it is essential and we shall never go through the gate of repentance unless we know that penetrating conviction of sin that reaches to the very core. "Go through, go through the gates". How shall we know when we have gone through this gate? by a broken and contrite humble spirit, we shall be dissolved at the foot of the Cross.

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

O a bitter sweet is repentance. It is a sacred experience. I feel it warrantable to say that there is not a single grace of the spirit that is not in exercise in a repenting sinner's heart. Have you been through it? Through this gate? Do you know what repentance is following conviction of sin?

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone,
But a sense of blood bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

A dissolved heart, as Mary when she went behind Jesus, washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Like the prodigal, he had discovered to himself what he was when he brought himself to ruin, to beggary, to want. "I will arise and go to my father". O blessed repentance. "Go through, go through the gate".

Another gate is faith. We can never enter into anything of a spiritual character but by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith it is impossible to know Him. Faith. The greatest grace of the spirit. It is a premier grace. It works with hope, we cannot separate the graces of the Spirit, faith hope and love, you cannot separate them but you can distinguish them. You cannot separate their work, faith goes forward and brings back a report. Faith looks into the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit reveals to faith the mystery of the Gospel, faith brings it back into the heart, hope believes the report. O what a blessed door is the door of faith! "Go through, go through the gates".

We were singing just now, showing the distinction between notion and vital religion. The real difference between a dead professor and a ~~chi~~ child of God is living faith. "Go through, go through the gate", and where this faith brings back news, good news of heaven, then hope hopes in what faith reveals. If we have not faith in our hearts there is no reception of the truth. It is the faculty to which the Holy Spirit reveals the things of God. Hope. A door of hope is opened in the valley of Achor, in the valley of trouble, where there is a discovery of sin. You take this in the apostle's case, at least I have traced it in the 7th Romans, wonderful chapter that is, and yet that experience was the apostles when he was a seasoned pilgrim; but he came to that point, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and if he had stopped there, it would have been despair, but there was a gate. There was a door of hope, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord". I have often visualised the apostle's faith, the eyes of his faith looking away from his own wretchedness to its blessed Object, to the glory of the Redeemer. "Go through, go through the gates."

Then there are doors and gates into the church of God, and one gate is the ordinance of believer's baptism. This is a divine institution. It is a commandment. It is a mystery that some most blessed, most gracious people cannot follow the ordinance of believer's baptism by immersion, but I could challenge any to give a reason for it. I have never known a satisfactory reason for not being able to follow the ordinance of believer's baptism by immersion. I doubt if it is possible to give a reason for objecting to it, but it is a door into the church, a very blessed one. O how good it is when a poor sinner under the influence of the love of God is constrained to follow Him. By faith, to see His track, to follow Him in His sufferings, His overwhelmings, and to be made willing in the day of His power, to suffer with Him, to be made conformable unto His death, and to be raised again to newness of life. Well, the glory of Christ is in it, it is not an essential to salvation, but it is essential to obedience.

But now, at last, there will be a gate to enter into the city, that is, the gate of death. We must go through it. You cannot pass by it. But what a mercy it is to have this preparation of the heart when we come down to the swellings of Jordan. How beautifully does Bunyan speak of the different characters that come down to that gate. There was Ignorance, he hired a ferryman to take him over the river and he never entered in to the city, but Christian and Hopeful, they went through the gate, and that is before us. Ah my friends, there may be some of you who through fear of death are all your lifetime subject to bondage, but if the blessed Spirit should reveal to you the Lord Jesus and your union with Him, when He was in the grave, One with Him when He rose, and should give to you a sweet hope that because the Lord Jesus, the glorious Head has risen and is in heaven, you will be with Him, and you will be like Him, "For we shall see Him as He is".

So there will be these gates to go through until the final entrance into eternal glory. "Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way of the people". The end of the way prepared is heaven. "I go to prepare a place for you"; therefore, heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and their way thither is prepared. "Prepare ye the way of the people", and this needs a Guide, not a blind guide. "If the blind guide the blind they shall both fall into the ditch". "To prepare the way of the people" is to cast up the highway as the next clause. "Prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway". It is to preach Christ. "I am the way, the truth and the life". "The new and living way which He hath consecrated through the veil, that is to say His flesh". Paul writing to the Hebrews gives us a little help upon this point and we are safe my friends, if we cleave to the Word of God. The point we are upon is this, "Prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway", says Paul to the Hebrews, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering". "Prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway", and, therefore, it is to preach Christ from the manger to the Cross. Because between the manger and the Cross the Lord Jesus Himself was casting up the highway to heaven. In

everything He did, in all that He suffered. He has gone to prepare a place for you, but He has prepared the way there, and the Holy Ghost, taking of the things of Christ and reveals them to a sinner's heart that prepares the way, casts up the highway in their experience. So that there will be a connexion between every blessed doctrine of the Gospel and your experience. We read of the feet being shod with the preparation of the Gospel, and "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass and as thy days thy strength shall be, so that the way is prepared though a rough and thorny way. A way which is as a race, a race which is laid with obstacles, with impossibilities, with impassable mountains, with deep ravines, yet there the way is to be prepared, mountains are to flow down, valleys are to be exalted, and this shows the various experiences of the Lord's people who are taught by the Spirit.

On Friday we were trying to speak of those different changes but if we are in the footsteps of the flock we shall prove that this way, though it is prepared, is set before us in the 107th Psalm. A beautiful, experimental Psalm which shows the way through the wilderness to the City of habitation, and you will notice that through that Psalm, those pilgrims were kept close to the Lord, He was their centre as well as their end. "Prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones". It is a stony, thorny, rough path. It is through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom. His people must enter. They must because the responsibility and the government of their entrance into the kingdom is upon the shoulders of the Lord Jesus Christ, upon His shoulders, and He did not fail nor be discouraged. Their final perseverance is assured. Their guide is an infallible Guide, they have to endure, to endure unto the end, they have omnipotence with them, omniscience, immutability, He who knows no death, no decay, no desolation, and O to be able to lift up and to cast up this highway, and to take out the stones. The objections, the hindrances, things that cause stumbling and falling, for His people are subject to all these things, there is no perfection here. There is no Church that is perfect, we are all imperfection and we are subject to the hindrances, the stumbling blocks and we would look at a few of them and try and gather out these stones.

Some of them are such that we shall never get rid of them while we live. Such as, carnal reason and unbelief. that will never be eradicated, but blessed be God it is subdued by living faith, but then there are doubts and fears only known to His people. One would think that if one had living faith in Christ that that would be the person to have no doubts and no fears. It may sound a contradiction but it is those that have a false faith that have neither doubts nor fears. There are no bands in their death, their strength is firm. But if we have faith, that faith will be tried, and we have doubts and fears that through our own carnality and the temptations of the devil, it would not be wise for me to tell you the terrible stabs that I have in my conscience from infidelity and atheism. You might say to me well, you ought not to be in the pulpit, whether I ought or not I know what it is. We shall be atheists while we live, but O blessed be God, where sin abounds grace does much more abound.

But you will find these hindrances, the devil will lay these stones in your way, stumbling stones, doubts and fears and unbelief. Then there will also be questionings about your beginning. Have a temptation that it is all mere fancy, that you are self-deceived and have deceived other people. Then again many fears, and to your apprehension a cause for those fears. You will fear that the whole of your religion is one act of presumption. When you try to pray you will feel that your prayer will anger the Lord, for we read that He was angry at their prayers and you will feel He must be angry at mine. O the hindrances and the conflict of a living soul and when the Lord hides His face then you cannot behold Him. Then there are other stones, and these are very solemn, when any who have made a profession of religion apostatise. Judas proved a traitor. They did not suspect him at all. They trusted him enough to make him their treasurer. What a stumbling block it was too

John the Baptist, that great prophet was cast into prison and was beheaded. O my friends, when carnal reason begins to look at second causes, to look at things seen, things natural, what stones, what hindrances, what causes for trembling there are. Then there are offences that come. It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom they come. Well, gather out the stones, the only way that these stones can be gathered out is to direct the eye of faith up from the world, beyond all the wilderness and get a sight of the Lord Jesus Who led captivity captive, ascended on high, got the victory over death sin and hell. O my friends, we began one year, it was last year and I have never forgotten it, with the 121st Psalm. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help", and if our eyes are up unto Him then it will remove every hindrance and every stumbling block.

"Go through, go through the gates, prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people". A standard is a banner. It is a rallying point to which an army may rally. All the time that banner is held high then there is hope of victory. But this standard is Christ in the Gospel, and He was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness. He is lifted up in the ministry by the Lord's servants. He is lifted up in the heart by the Holy Spirit. O blessed banner! There are many things written upon it for the encouragement of those who rally to the Gospel, who fly for refuge to that blessed hope set before them in the Gospel. Written upon that banner is the sovereign electing love of God. Written upon that banner is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His redeeming love and His finished work. Written upon that banner is the Holy Spirit, the Creator of the new birth, the revealer of Christ, the Anointer; and this banner, this standard is to be lifted up for the people in the proclamation of the Gospel and have not some of you under a sense both of the sacred attractions of Christ and under a sense of your need, have rallied to that uplifted standard, that banner? Felt that you have been gathered to it under the preaching of the Gospel, it is lifted up on high above all your enemies. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His incarnation, in His blessed deity, in His glorious righteousness.

Well this is the command for the preaching of the Gospel. But there is this about it my friends, if a minister is to go through, to go through these gates ministerially, it is for the people to follow. You might think sometimes that the ministry concerns the minister, but it concerns you. Of what use is a shepherd if there is no flock, of what use is a minister where there is no congregation? and the Lord has joined the two together, that through the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. A wonderful connexion, wonderful connexion, and we are thankful that we have evidence that the Lord has made that connexion even here.

Well, may the text itself be impressed by the Spirit on your heart and may I conclude with what I commenced, to go to the gate is not to go through it. We must go through the gates and if we do when we come to the last gate of death, then that gate will be prepared, it will indeed,

"Prepare me gracious God,
To stand before Thy face,
Thy Spirit must the work perform,
For it is all of grace".

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited
for publication.)