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Sermond preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed"  
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"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, Thus saith the Lord: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown".

Jeremiah 2 v.2

It is a mystery and a mercy that the eternal God the Son has made it possible to enter into relationships with unworthy sinners. The disciples came unto Him on one occasion and said, "Thy Mother and Thy brethren are without desiring to speak unto Thee, the Lord said unto them, behold my Mother and my brethren, my sisters, are they that do the will of God". And these relationships would be impossible but that the Lord took human nature, and every relationship His people have in Him. He, that inexpressible One, equal with His Father, the express image of His Person, the brightness of His Father's glory, yet He, in the mystery of godliness has assumed real relationships with His people by taking the exact same nature.

He is not ashamed to call them brethren, and perhaps one of the greatest mysteries is that He has entered into a relationship as the Bridegroom to the Bride. The Church was given to Christ by the Father in the Covenant to become His Bride, and in the 24th Genesis we have a beautiful illustration, an inspired illustration of how the Holy Ghost through the ministry, sends forth servants to find a Bride for Isaac. It is a beautiful illustration, and therefore, shows that important connexion which Paul explained to the Corinthians, "It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe".

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying," that is, the Church of God. All His love, all communications from heaven to earth, all the streams from the river of God flow and terminate in the Church of God. It is there that He commands the blessing. It is there that the brethren meet together: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; it is like the ointment that was poured upon the head, that went down to the beard, even to the skirts of the garment, there He commanded the blessing, even life for evermore".

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals". It is indeed a mercy to have a spiritual youth. You may not remember the day, but more or less distinctly you will understand in your experience that there was, "A period known to God" in your lifetime, when with Ruth you were separated from those things that were in your nature. The same with Abraham, the Lord called him alone and blessed him, he went out not knowing whither he went. It is a good thing to have some evidence, if it be but an inkling of that period in your souls experience. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals". We have the same thing in the 2nd Hosea, how the Lord there allured a rebellious sinner, how He hedged up her ways so that she could not overtake her lovers. How He brought her into the wilderness, "He found him in a desert land, a waste howling wilderness" and that is the world. The Lord brings His people to feel that this world is a wilderness and that their nature is as much a wilderness as is the world. Do you remember when you first found that those things in which you delighted and found satisfaction and pleasure, there was death brought into them? What was sweet to your nature was made bitter. Do you remember when there was an aching void created in your soul? a mysterious void it was. You began to feel two things, a need of a refuge and a shelter, when the Holy Ghost shone within by the Holy law of God and showed you yourself, that everything was crooked, universal death within your being, and so that you began to feel after if haply you might find God, and the second thing was when there was first an inkling of hope.

I do believe this, and it is a dawn of hope in the soul, when a poor sinner first realises that sin is pardonable. It may be long, long before you know pardon, but there is a ray of hope when a poor sinner first believes that even his sin is pardonable and is brought to come with the leper which came to the Lord Jesus and "Beseeching Him, and kneeling down before him, saying, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean", and then as the Holy Ghost gradually brings the dawn, the day dawn, the Day Star the first rising of the Sun of Righteousness and the eyes of the understanding begin to be opened. Then there was in your experience what we were trying to speak of last Wednesday, "My soul followeth hard after Thee, Thy right hand upholdeth me.. open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". Life and light entering into the heart all the graces of the Spirit, a new creature created. "Old things are passed away and behold, all things are become new".

It is a wonderful time, some of you may remember when the Hymnbook was a new book and you sang the hymns with understanding. You may remember when the Word of God was made a new book to you and began to speak to you. When it first entered your heart and gave light and understanding to the simple. When you first, as Bunyan put it to Christian, "he said, dost thou see yonder wicket gate? Christian said no, dost thou see yonder shining light,? he said, I think I do, follow that light and it will bring you to the wicket gate" O that first dawning of the truth by the Holy Spirit upon a sinners heart. All things are new, new eyes, new ears, new hearts, new desires, a new appetite, faith moving in a new direction, toward a new object.

"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth," There is a tenderness in those days., the love of God in the heart, the tender fear of God, a fear of any approach of sin, and so you see the kindness of Ruth. The Lord takes it as a kindness as He remembers it. She forsook her country and her kindred. No persuasion of Naomi could induce her to return. Naomi did not intend that she should return. Naomi was a type of the Church of God, and Ruth was a type of a young believer. Naomi was putting her under a test. In Orpah there was manifested a destitution of life and grace, no new light shined into her heart, no grace reached her soul and therefore, she could not stand the test. Naomi, as it were, said to them, you will have no material advantage if you come with me, you will have tribulation, disappointments, conflicts, calamities, reproaches, go back. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth"; said Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee, where thou goest I will go, where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people and thy God my God".

"I remember", saith the Lord. Have you ever had an experience like that? Have you ever been gathered into the sanctuary and sat down under His blessed shadow, and the fruit of Christ as it has been brought forth in the ministry has been sweet to your taste? You could say with Job, "Thy word was unto me more than my necessary food".

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth". Paul, he manifested this grace; "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him". O this is music in the ears of the Lord. He looks down upon these people and He calls them His doves. Doves which can find no satisfaction nor rest outside of the ark. "O my dove, that art in the cleft of the Rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely". Now that is just what the Lord says here. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals". An espousal really is a marriage contract, it is an engagement. These espousals were really in the first place in the Covenant of grace, that is where

the Lord Jesus was espoused unto His church, as we have it in the 10th hymn,

"Then in the glass of His decrees,  
Christ and His bride appeared as One,  
Her sins by imputation His,  
While she in spotless splendour shone".

And it is from that Covenant and that covenant engagement and promises that all the promises, the love manifested by Christ to His church proceeds. There is a great truth - all the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, all vital godliness, all gracious experience, proceeds from the Covenant of grace and when the Lord manifests Himself to His people, then the "Secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him", and He shows them His covenant. Shows them the marriage carried out, shows them the Lambs Book of Life, and their name therein. O my friends, when He brings His people out of the world and its dead pleasures, its dead riches, its dead honours, see what He leads them into! O the richness, the unsearchable riches of Christ, rich in mercy, rich in grace!

"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness in a land that that was not sown". It was so when the Lord brought His people out of the land of Egypt. He brought them into the wilderness, they were utterly dependent upon heaven. He fed them with manna, bread from heaven. He maintained them so that their shoes waxed not old nor their clothes upon them. The wilderness is a place of dependants, nothing can spring from this world but what is under the curse of God. "There is sin and curse in every stream", and it is a wonderful thing when the Holy Ghost first reveals to a poor sinner what this world really is, and at the same time reveals the kingdom of God and all the fulness of Christ, opens the treasury of grace and leads them into the land of the living, the living Gospel. O what a portion it is and the reality of it when it comes into the soul and fills the soul with those things which are imperishable, sets before a poor sinner a refuge.

"When thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown". There is nowhere in this world that contains a single living thing, nothing spiritual, nothing in our nature. It is all the gift of God, it is all contained in that one mighty word, salvation, revealed in the everlasting Gospel, and when that is set before a sinner there is a going after it, and after Him in Whom is the fulness of it. "When thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown". Now I wonder how many here are inside of this blessed verse. There might be a degree of experience and I do mean in a life of faith. I do think about young people, there are fashions in this world and there is a danger because some even well meaning young people feel that under modern conditions and advanced education there is a need to present the Gospel in a way that will suit these modern advances, but that is the danger. There are changes, developments and inventions, there is a natural progress, some of it is a downward progress, a degeneration, and when you come to consider that they are building great Universities and colleges but, at the same time, they have to build larger and larger prisons, it is very evident that advanced education and science cannot alter the heart of man, and the higher one rises in natural science, where there is no grace, it always takes that sinner away from God.

O what a mercy it is to be brought inside of this text, and by grace to choose that better part which Mary chose, which Ruth chose, which Lydia chose, which Paul the Apostle chose. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful," Mary hath chosen that one thing, counts it more than all the many things, you are careful and troubled about. And when a poor sinner has this blessed one thing which contains heaven and earth, godliness, which hath the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come, and when in the Sanctuary these things are brought forth and the Lord rends the heavens and comes down,

then there is a going after Him in the wilderness. We are still in the wilderness and sometimes the contrast is so sacred. Have you ever paused to think of it. I believe there are some here who know the contrast between Zion and the rich things of God. They are a substance to faith and nothing of them can fade, none can die, nothing can perish; a contrast between that and the things of this world. I have noticed lately in the paper there have been three notable men, one worth millions, another who is greatly honoured in the world of Sports, but they all died about 60 years old. Finished, but when a poor sinner by faith sees the Gospel in all its richness, the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, feels something of the effects of His grace and sees that in His precious blood there is such virtue that can take out the deepest stain and render one to be whiter than the snow; and to hear the voice of the Lord, and to go after Him as you hear His voice in the Scriptures and in the secrets of your heart, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want", well, the Lord remembers it.

"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals". These espousals are mutual, love must be mutual, but the Lord is first. Ruth really entered into a covenant with the Lord, as did Jacob at Bethel, but the Lord is first and if we truly love Him it is because He first loved us, and if we are made a seeking soul under a sense both of our need and of the attractions of Christ, it is because He first sought us, and if we feel in our heart faith opening her arms to receive Him, it is because He first received us. It is very sweet to feel that mutuality in your soul. It is an evidence of eternal union with the Lord Jesus Christ. A union as close as the head is to the body. A union as fruitful as husband and wife.

Now if these things are true, what a remarkable person is a child of God who has such a kingdom in His heart. Who has such a glorious Bridegroom. The wedding itself will be in heaven, the espousal is here upon earth.

"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me". I wonder how many of us are really following after the Lord Jesus as the object of our faith, seeking a portion for our souls. I wonder how many of us are following after Him in a land that is not sown, by taking up our cross daily, denying ourselves and following Him? A cheap religion is a false religion. If our religion costs us nothing, it is worth nothing, even if it is correct. It cost Ruth a lot, it cost her all that nature loves. It is not an easy thing, my friends, to be a real Christian. It is the easiest thing in the world to be a professor of religion, but "By their fruits ye shall know them". I have wondered, solemnly, how I really stand before God. But we have a rule in the Scriptures, we can know if we are willing to be weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary, If the Gospel comes to us in word only our profession of the Gospel will be in word only. Here was separation: "Thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown". The world is richly sown, the devil has sown it with those seeds which will bring forth a bitter harvest, but, blessed be God, there is a good land, and a good seed. Naomi and Ruth, they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest; and when this poor sinner that is following hard after the Lord with a wide open mouth, then he will know from time to time that there are handfuls of purpose, dropped by the reapers. Have you ever found that, if not a handful of purpose, a crumb of mercy?

And this following after the Lord Jesus in the wilderness is the result of the life of God in the soul. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness". And you will follow after Him in the wilderness through this blessed channel, the Word of God. Sometimes you will trace His track:

"His track I see and I'll pursue  
The narrow way, 'til Him I view".

O faith sometimes believes that while it is a way of tribulation yet, by the covenant of grace its people must enter therein.

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals". He remembers that and on their behalf there is one thing He forgets, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more". O it is wonderful when you feel to be in darkness and have no light, to remember that the darkness and the light are both alike to the Lord, and that He remembers the days of your youth, and will bring you to remember it. Job said, "O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined about my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness". It is a dark world now. Well may the Lord make this experience manifest in our midst.

I can but believe there are those who are following after the Lord, who say in their hearts, "To Whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life". The Lord Jesus really tested those disciples just as Naomi tested Ruth and Orpah and in the days of the Lord Jesus there were those who went back and walked no more with Him. There is a breaking point to a natural religion, a notional religion, it may look very very fair for a long time, and then one who seems to have the right thing may get with a person who is erroneous and attends an erroneous place and they get married and from that time "They went back and walked no more with Him". The Lord said to His disciples, "will ye also go away? Peter said, unto Him" - not, Lord I will not go away, I am too well established, but "Lord to Whom shall we go? if we do go away, "To Whom shall we go?".

Well, if you have that in your religion, be thankful, but do not rest there. O may we give the Lord no rest until we can descend into our hearts and find the Saviour there.

Amen.

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