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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 9:24.

These early chapters of Jeremiah are very pathetic. Jeremiah was commissioned of the Lord and his commission was a very heavy one. Constantly he had to declare the grievous judgments of God upon the land and upon His people, and it would seem here and there in the prophecy that poor Jeremiah became very wearied of it. In the 15th chapter he said: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them cloth curse me." (v.10) It was a very heavy work that Jeremiah had to do. But there is something very vital and very living about the lamentations of a living soul. I could wish that I felt it more.

The opening of this chapter, in view of the conditions in the churches of God today, expresses the exercise of living souls: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" The church, Zion, is not only in a low place, but as we sometimes sing:-

*What should fill us with surprise,
They seem divided too. (Thomas Kelly)*

But then, as we read down this chapter, it may be those of you who read it attentively did see that there is a condition expressed there very similar to what obtains in the nation today. But what first strikes the mind is the 12th verse, the Lord has spoken of the sins of the people, their manifold sins, their disobedience, adulteries, immoralities and deceits. But when He comes to the 12th verse, He makes an enquiry. And when we look at the world, the nation, and the church of God today, it makes this 12th verse very significant: "Who is the wise man that may understand this?" – that is to say: Where can we find a man that acknowledges the cause of all the condition that obtains in the world and in the church today? "And who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it?" Where can we find today in the nation among our religious leaders any who have anything in the way of true mourning and repentance, as in the first verse: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!" It seems that there was no wise man could be found, so the Lord answers for Himself, and says: "Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein...Therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them even, this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink."

Well then, He comes down to the text, and the preceding verse: "Thus saith the Lord" – under these conditions, when there could not be a wise man found – "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." Natural wisdom is necessary; it is necessary to maintain a civilization. If it was not for natural wisdom and natural learning we should return to cannibalism, to the dark-ages. Natural wisdom is good; when it is used aright it is good for natural things. But "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom" when it

comes to the judgments of God in a nation, or when it respects the salvation of the soul. The wisdom of this world can only go as far as nature, and therefore, the wisdom of the wise cannot tell us anything concerning the things of God. Men seem able, especially in this age of advanced science, to find out many things and many inventions, but man by wisdom knows not God, neither by searching can he find Him out; and that is a truth, a knowledge of God is a secret. Therefore, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might." The weakness of God is greater than the power of men, and the might and power of men is utter weakness when it comes to the purposes of God in providence, among nations, and in churches. "None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35) Therefore, "Neither let the mighty man glory in his might." And when we come to the matters of salvation, it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zechariah 4:6) It is a great thing to be really taught this in our own experience, because in these things, and even with respect to the purposes and counsels in nations, in families, in our spiritual experience, in providence, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Proverbs 16:33) Therefore, in the very next chapter Jeremiah says: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself." (v.23) We need that wisdom which is from above, which is profitable to direct our way.

"Neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." It does not condemn a man from having riches if he has got them honestly, but the riches of this world are nothing to trust in at all, and there are troubles, troubles in the nation that all the wealth of the nation cannot deliver it from, and personally, we shall be brought into troubles out of which we could not buy ourselves if we were ever so rich. And God will teach His people that, not only that riches in this world are the provision that God has made in creation, but there are not other riches really – whether it is pound notes or golden sovereigns – they are no use to you really; they are just tokens, we cannot eat them, cannot eat golden sovereigns, nor can we be clothed in £1 notes; there is nothing in them really. True riches are what grows in the fields; true riches are in His wonderful works of creation; they are the only real riches, and it is very blessed to feel it.

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom" – because He can turn our wisdom into foolishness. "Neither let the mighty man glory in his might" – for He can turn our strength into weakness. "Let not the rich man glory in his riches." And it would be a mercy if we were learning the truth of the 24th verse. When you come to look at it, and look at the condition of things in the nation, and in the church of God, and in the world today, what great teaching this is! These things are before us every day. Why my friends, the Lord has permitted things in the world to get so solemnly complicated and perilous, that it is very evident that neither the wisdom nor the power nor the riches of men can control it at all. It is evident. But then when we come to consider salvation, how much less this human wisdom, or power, or riches can contribute one iota to salvation! It is a good thing to be taught this, not to say it and acquiesce in it, but to be brought there. I think that the teaching in the Laodicean church comes in here. Men naturally, and religious men, say they are rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing. O but the ignorance and foolishness of it! And the Lord may bring judgements upon us in the nation – very solemn – things will get worse yet, when the foolishness of such pride will be made solemnly evident. "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" – put their hands in their pockets, as it were, independent of everybody, and independent of God. O but, says the Lord: "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17) What good teaching that is! Have we been taught that –

that in our nature we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked? I believe I have, in a measure.

And that brings us to the text. Have we learnt that much? Is there nothing else? Does the Lord leave His people in a state of ignorance, wretchedness, poverty? No. "But let him that glorieth, glory in this" – there is something to glory in. The Psalmist said: "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." (Psalm 34:2) Very strange contrast there! There is a boasting minister, and a humble congregation; a minister boasting in the Lord, and a humble congregation being glad. "But let him that glorieth glory in this" – and O how your heart will respond to it! When you look at the nation – and you love your native land – and on the church of God, look upon your own case and your circumstances, and how that you have proved that, you know. "I know that the way of man is not in himself" – and you have proved it. But it does not just leave you there, does not leave a poor sinner derelict and abandoned: "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me."

Well, that may be an amazing word to those who feel they have no understanding at all. But may the Holy Spirit help us, open and enlighten the eyes of our understanding to see whether we have been taught the lesson in the 23rd and 24th verses. And we have some hope that He has given us an understanding. One or two Scriptures would help us. You take, for instance, that wonderful Psalm that we are so fond of – 107. You look at the pathway through there, and you will see as you read that Psalm, that the wise man had nothing to glory in, and the mighty man when he was brought down to the gates of death, bound in affliction and iron, could not glory in his strength, and that the rich man could not glory in his riches, for when their cattle increased, then again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. What then? "Whoso is wise will ...understand." All the way through that Psalm there is wisdom from above. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me."

It is a great thing if we have that wisdom from above that concludes that Psalm: "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." And there is another thing: that good word that was brought before us last Lord's Day evening. The continuation of that text is this: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20) Now you look at that understanding: "given us understanding, that we may know Him that is true." Now look at the text again, and don't forget the verse that is before it: "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Poor sinners, to understand the Lord! You might say: Well, I really have difficulty to understand the Bible when I read it." Many years ago, there was an anxious seeking soul at Heathfield, who said to me: "I cannot read the Bible any more. I don't think I shall read it any more." I said: "Why not?" She said: "I cannot understand it." I said to her: "Don't try to understand it." I could see that it was a temptation of Satan, but I said to her: "Ask the Lord to say to you what the Bible says. If you read this: 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' don't try to understand it, but if you feel to be the sinner, ask the Lord for mercy."

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Well, take any evidences of life to understand the Lord. You understand when you are hungry; do you need

anybody to teach you, to tell you that you are hungry? And do you understand by that hunger what you need, that it is food? Well, in that simple way, do you understand that much of the Lord? Do you hunger and thirst for Him? feel a deep need of all that He is, and all that He has done for the salvation of your poor soul? Well now, there is a great understanding in that hunger and thirst. Again, those of you who have been in a tempest, there are several recorded in the New Testament of those that were in a storm. When a ship is in jeopardy and likely to be capsized, would not those in that ship understand a harbour? And have you not ever understood the Lord Jesus as He is manifest in the Scriptures as a Refuge, a Hiding Place, a Shelter from the storm, as a shipwrecked mariner would understand a harbour? So there is a connexion between your experience and what the Holy Ghost is doing, where He is leading you in your soul, and the Lord Jesus Christ, you will understand, from that point of view. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Do you understand this much as a poor sinner, so beautifully and simply expressed in our hymn: "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." Do you understand that? The world does not. Some of our great scientists know nothing at all about it; it is a secret. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Do you understand what those sin-bitten Israelites understood, when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? They were bidden to look and live. There was a connexion between that emblem and the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, between Him who was made sin that His people might be made the righteousness of God in Him and their sin-bitten, sin-stung condition. They understood it, and looked. Do you understand it? "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me," understands as a poor sinner. It is a sweet understanding, though very simple. Yet the vulture's eye cannot find out this secret path. And as you go on in meditation on this text, you think of the preceding verse. It will show you how suitable it is.

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him" – the other is "let not," "**let not.**" But when you come here: "**let him** that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." O what a knowledge, what an understanding! Paul calls it excellent: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Philippians 3:8) And if a thing is excellent it must excel all things beside. "That he understandeth and knoweth Me" – that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness. But this knowledge of the Lord Jesus, with this understanding, is in answer to Paul's prayer to the Ephesians; he prayed that they might have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ" – that is the only saving knowledge. There is a knowledge of Him which is not saving. There are two parts, really, to an understanding; there is an intelligent understanding of the mind, but this is experimental understanding, a knowledge in the heart; and the two things are distinct.

You will understand then, the Gospel, understand that it is a refuge for sinners. Why, my friends, it will give us an understanding of two main things: an understanding of what we are in ourselves, and some understanding of who Christ is. The fulness of the Godhead is in Him. All the divine perfections meet in Him; and He was anointed immeasurably with the Holy Ghost. What a mercy then it is to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened to such an extent as we have referred to: "We know that the Son of God is come, and He hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him." This is the height of faith, to be in Him. And how is this? Why: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." And have you not

sometimes that understanding, and the witness in yourself, of the Lord Jesus; when you have under pressure in pressing an urgent case at the throne of grace, have you not been conscious of the inward wrestling power of the Holy Ghost, by which you have been able to take hold of Christ's strength? It has given you an understanding of His righteousness. I think we referred to it the other day in the 64th Isaiah: "We all are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away." (v.6) Now you will know that, you will understand it; but when the Holy Ghost reveals the opposite, and you pour out your heart at the throne of grace, and follow after righteousness, seeking the Lord, and the application of His sin-atonement, cleansing, healing, pardoning blood, you will understand, you will know Him. Understand.

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." But what a mercy it is to know that we are in Him! How can we know that we are in Him? O we do want real solid truth upon which we can die! Well, the only way that I know that we can know Him is for Him to dwell in our hearts as the hope of glory. If He dwells in you, you dwell in Him. And how does He dwell in the heart of a poor sinner? Well, this could never be an experience except for His incarnation. He dwells in the heart of His people as their Saviour, as their Intercessor, as their Substitute, as their Mediator, as their good Shepherd, as a Brother born for adversity. And if He thus dwells in your heart, then you dwell in Him. He gives us an understanding that we are in Him that is true."

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness." To exercise lovingkindness is to dispense love; and what is this? The whole work of the Gospel, the complete Gospel, the Gospel is the lovingkindness of the Lord; and to exercise lovingkindness is to dispense the Gospel. It is for the streams of the river of God to flow down into a poor sinner's heart. It is for the Holy Ghost to take of the things of Jesus, and to bring them into the soul; to exercise and to execute love.

So you take the complete text: "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness" – execute it, communicate it, out of My fullness. The fullness of Christ is the Gospel – exactly the same thing. Well, what lovingkindness then we have in the Gospel, it is the lovingkindness, the love of the Father. This dear prophet, he knew this. In the 31st chapter he says: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me" – that is, from eternity, unto me. He traced back this love of God to the electing love of the Father: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And the effect and consequence of that love is: "therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" – and that is the exercise. It is this lovingkindness to be shed abroad in the heart, the love of God, and all that love has done, all that love has laid up. Love immutable, love which could never be quenched, love which is immutable, love from which nothing can separate. O what a great thing it is to understand and know the Lord! "I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness," and He exercises this lovingkindness from heaven. He has purchased everything for His people by His precious blood. He has wrought out everlasting righteousness, by His perfect life and the fulfilling and honouring of the law in obedience, in His sufferings and His death. And now He is in heaven, He exercises the whole of the benefits and virtues of His Person, work, life and death in the hearts of His people. An amazing person is a child of God! And this really is the kingdom, it is the kingdom of grace here, the kingdom of grace in the heart, the work of the Holy Ghost is this lovingkindness. O what there is to glory in!

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." In His prayer to His divine Father He mentioned this: "Father, the hour is come: glorify Thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee." And then He goes on to say: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:1,2) It is eternal life to know Him; it must therefore, be eternal death to be ignorant of Him. O then, the blessedness of this text: "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me."

Paul said: "That I may know Him." I suppose there was not an apostle that knew more of Him than Paul did, yet he said: "That I may know Him." He said that he had not attained: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:-12) So that there is an horizon to a spiritual faith while here below, and that horizon recedes as you get to it. You know on the sea you see the horizon where the sky appears to touch the sea; well, when you get to that point you will find another horizon beyond, and when you get there, there will another horizon beyond that. And so faith in this life: follow after the Lord, go from strength to strength, from faith to faith, from glory to eternal glory; and what understanding and knowledge this is! O how it does show the truth of what we sing:

*Knowledge of all terrestrial things,
Ne'er to my soul true pleasure brings,
No joy, but in the Son of God,
No peace but through His pardoning blood. (Richard Burnham)*

Let us just read the 23rd verse again to show the contrast – there is sometimes something very blessed in a contrast: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness" – dispenses – He is in heaven and dispenses lovingkindness, dispenses the Gospel, and there is the throne of grace. And if we have this knowledge of Him, and an understanding of our need of Him, then we shall go in prayer to the throne of grace. O here we see this understanding. The Lord opened their understandings: "Then opened He their understanding." (Luke 24:45) When you come to the throne of grace you must know Him; you cannot pray to an unknown God. And if you pray to Him you must understand what you ask for, you must understand that He has it. You might have a full assurance of faith of the efficacy and virtue of His precious blood, but we want it. O what a blessed understanding and knowledge there is in a seeking soul at the throne of grace! And it will be expressed in some very simple language. The woman with an afflicted daughter: "Lord, help me." That was, she understood and knew Him, that He was the Lord that would exercise the lovingkindness of His help.

Take for instance Job: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" I don't want to see anybody else, nor anything else. I do not ask for those camels that the Sabeans have taken away, to see them, but O that I might find Him, that I might find God! An understanding, a knowledge that the Lord exercises, communicates, dispenses the blessings, the savour of the benefits of the Gospel, and thus His people are made rich through His poverty.

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, and judgement." He has judgement for His people. Judgement does not mean altogether judgement upon the wicked; it includes that, but His judgement with respect to His people is when He takes up their case and judges their case and becomes their advocate, pleads their cause above, and He executes judgement. And you take it this way, that He sends forth judgement unto victory. Now He did this when He was here upon earth. The law judged Him, and it demanded perfection, and each part, each step in the work of salvation, so complete with perfection that it was sent forth unto victory in everything He did. For instance, in His temptations "He was tempted in all points like as we are," therefore "He is able to succour them that are tempted" – to exercise that lovingkindness, to succour tempted people, because when He was tempted He got the victory over the devil's temptations, and He sent forth judgement unto victory. So He did in His sufferings, so He did in the garden of Gethsemane when He took the cup and drank it, that cup filled with the wrath and curse of God. He so drank it that He was made a curse for His people, so drank it complete that He sent forth judgement unto victory. Now this judgement for His people He exercises in their hearts, takes up their cases. Lovingkindness; judgement; He is a God of judgement. And He has a living family, and you know in a family you must not treat all the children alike. And He is a God of judgement, of method, of wisdom. He knows how to handle His people, and what they need. He knows when to give them a tonic, He knows when to give them a purge, He knows when to put them in the fire, He knows when to take them out. He executes judgement for their good, so that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgement and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." He delights in them, the Lord does. Who else does? His people. Do you? Do you? Can you really say: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want?" The exhortation is: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." (Palm 37:4)

There is the unity of faith in this way, that there is a beautiful mutuality between Christ and His people; what He delights in, they delight in. "For the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross," and the joy that was set before Him was His church, His redeemed church, and the joy that is set before His people is the Lord Jesus. There is a blessed mutuality in the union that subsists between Christ and His church.

Well, there are the two verses, and in the chapter we have the world and all the confusion of it. O may He bring us inside, and keep us safe within the 24th verse!

Amen.