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A Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Lord's Day Morning July 10th 1960.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:31-32.

The only final evidence of possessing divine faith is to endure unto the end. O, how many, and many recorded in the Word of God, endure for a while! There were three out of four hearers that were wrong – very solemn. And yet they all heard the same truth, it was the same seed, there was nothing the matter with the seed. It was the ground into which it fell that was wrong. Those by the wayside the word had no impression upon whatever; but that which fell in stony ground gave some hopes that there was life there, for it sprang up immediately, but it had no depth of earth, and when the sun arose because of persecution, it just withered away. That which was sown on thorny ground sprung up, but the thorns choked the word, and it became unfruitful.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews that believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." It is easier to begin a thing than to continue in it. There are many reasons why some never endure to the end, and do not continue in the word, but the main reason is that they are destitute of grace, destitute of living faith and the life of God. Notions they have in the head, a logical knowledge of the Bible, but no root. Very solemn to know the truth and be destitute of what we know, and that is very possible. "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." O, the difficulties in the way! O, what a wonder it is that any ever get safely through, as we have been singing in that beautiful hymn (1102)!

But the difficulties in the first place are because of what we are. In, those that will endure unto the end, it isn't an easy journey; it is a pilgrimage through a waste-howling wilderness, a dangerous voyage through stormy seas. But the great difficulty lies in this, that when one is called by grace, the Lord doesn't change nature, He doesn't eradicate sin, the old man of sin remains, carnality, unbelief, atheism, and a legion of devils within obstruct the way. But what a mercy it is to continue.

*"Brethren, would you know your stay,
What it is that keeps you still?
Why, though tempted every day,
Yet you stand, and stand you will?
Long before our birth,
Nay, before Jehovah laid
The foundations of the earth,
We were chosen in. your Head."*

(Gadsby's 77)

The secret of perseverance is the decrees of Jehovah in the covenant of grace, and therefore, it is said, and will be proved true, and a faithful saying: "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that

hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger;" and "The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So that the difficulties and hindrances that are before a pilgrim lie first in his depraved nature, together with the world and all its perils, beset with snares on every hand, a condemning devil. But says the Word: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

"If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." And of those disciples indeed, the Lord said: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations," and in My afflictions and reproaches, "and I appoint unto you a Kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me." But this continuing is in the midst of mighty oppositions, and as enabled we will try to trace this pilgrim continuing in the face of the world, the flesh and the devil.

"If ye continue in My word". You take the case of Ruth. Orpah had the same opportunity with respect to the external things of gracious Naomi. She heard the same truth, heard of Naomi's God, but it had no influence upon her at all, but Ruth clave unto Naomi, continued in the truth notwithstanding that in faithfulness Naomi warned her that if she went with her she would have no material advantage, would have much trouble and sorrows. O but, says Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave thee...thy God shall be my God and thy people shall be my people." She continued in the face of all the opposition that Naomi in faithfulness set before her.

Paul did the same thing. He pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. My friends, if we are being led forth by the Spirit the right way to heaven, we shall have to walk in the footsteps of the flock, and prove that it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom, because the kingdom of God is not of this world at all. Nothing of this world contributes anything at all to a spiritual life. Everything in the world is dead, vanity, vexation of spirit, darkness, all must come to an end. But O, one that is set on pilgrimage, seeing and feeling by divine teaching what they are, having been brought to realise the wreckage that sin has made of their very being and nature, and that all around their soul is giving way, and yet being surrounded by unshakable things that will never be removed, and that because of the infinite and eternal God through His eternal Son Who has brought immortal blessings down, then that soul in the confidence of faith is determined to follow hard after the Lord, wrestle hard toward heaven against wind and every enemy.

"If ye continue in My word." There is a continuing through good report and evil report. It is for the eye of faith to look straight on and disregard either smiles or frowns from men. Looking straight on, not at nothing, but at the Lord Jesus, the glorious Forerunner, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame," but endured reproach and spitting. And as He is, so are we in this world. O my friends, it is not easy to be a real Christian, to be despised and rejected of men, to be in our measure a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, to be continually losing our lives and denying ourselves, taking up a daily cross. Nature will never do it. Nobody will ever do it unless they have the persuasion of faith that there is something better to fight for, an incorruptible crown to run for, a prize to win Christ. "If ye continue." It is a continuing of faith.

It is a continuing in prayer. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." It is not easy to continue in prayer because it is at all seasons, in season and out of season. It needs great

faith to continue in prayer in the midst of a sense of desolation and darkness and soul destitution. Nothing will continue in these deep places and in the belly of hell but the life of God. There is the secret, nothing else, nothing different, nothing less. The vital life of Christ by virtue of union with Him is the only thing that will endure unto the end. O, it is very blessed to trace this continuing and enduring faith in those that have gone before! And for the encouragement of the Hebrews, Paul says: "Seeing that we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses." It is a mercy if we are compassed about with them, as we read the Word of God, as a light to our path and a lamp to our feet, and which enables us to continue in that narrow way that leads us to the Lamb. And if we are able, in reading the history of the fathers, if we can go step by step with them, and lay our experience against what is recorded of their history, if we have any real ground to believe that we have like precious faith with them, it does strengthen faith to continue in prayer without ceasing. It is fatal to give up, but living faith cannot give up if it would, because life is spontaneous. Indeed, the more pressure that is brought to bear upon a living faith, the more urgency, and this is another experimental reason of continuing, because the nature of grace is invincible, it is imperishable, it is immovable. The whole of the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul is impregnable, and as the Church of God is built upon Christ the Rock, so is every individual. And yet there will be an experience of the tempest of oppositions. "If ye continue in My word."

And the word here is the Holy Scriptures, and the Gospel of the grace of God that it reveals, and all the life and work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It is a holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering. But O, how we are tempted to give up! To continue when we feel our weakness, when we see and feel our sinfulness, feel our utter unworthiness, when we look back and see past offences which pain our eyes, when the Lord hides His face and is silent, when the devil roars, and a mocking Ishmael within, and circumstances without which seem to contradict everything, then to continue in the truth, in prayer! O, mighty grace is faith, and the power of faith is in God, and so Paul says: "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:5)

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." There are nominal disciples who are not disciples indeed; many went back and walked no more with Him. How far a professor can go in religion, and how near he may get to heaven in his profession is impossible to say. How near to despair and the brink of the pit a real child of God may sink cannot be determined, but according to the Scripture, some in their profession have risen very high. – Saul, and Judas, and Ahithophel, and many others. But O, how low some have sunk! "The pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." (Psalm 116:3) Jonah continued to pray in the belly of hell. O, nothing can kill living faith! And there is nothing between life and death. Some of you feel how vital it is, how solemn it is to come to the end and find that our name is Ignorance. Ignorance got on very well until he came to the end. He was ignorant of himself and of God, destitute of life and grace, and yet lived the life of a professor, and thought that at death he would hire a ferry-man to take him across the river. O blessed pilgrims, blessed wrestlers, blessed runners – those who fight the good fight of faith, and continue in the midst of all conditions to follow the Lord, continue in the truth, in the Gospel! And what a mercy it is not to be turned aside to error. You may perhaps think that you are so well instructed in the truth that it would be impossible for you to embrace error. It would not. I wish I did not know this for myself. It would not be prudent for me to tell you the terrible assaults I have had this week of atheism and infidelity

and temptation to turn to some error. Error is suitable to our fallen nature – anything but the truth as it is in Jesus. But what a mercy it is to continue in the Gospel.

And another thing is this, that it is because the blessed Spirit's work continues in the soul: "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it" – continue, finish it. He will never forsake the work of His own hands, and therefore our continuing in the things of God, and in the Gospel, and in prayer, and to bring forth fruit in our life, and lip, and conduct is because the Holy ghost continues a work of grace in the soul, continues a work of conviction and of repentance. "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed" – that is, proved and made manifest to be so. Have some of you feared lest you would never hold out to the end? I have, many times. You may say, "Then yours is a poor faith". Whether poor or not, O how many fears I have had:

"But much I fear, lest in some hour
Of sore temptation I may fall;
And, yielding to the tempter's power,
Faithless may prove, and give up all."

(Gadsby's 1043)

Many have done it, and I am no better than they. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" is my continual prayer.

"If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth" – know the truth in which you have continued. You will know the Gospel, and Christ Who is the Truth, because in the exercise of this continuing there is teaching in the very opposition and conflict, and under the chastenings of the Lord, in His corrections in our foolishness, our mistakes, our wanderings, our defeats, our many fears – there is teaching in it. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And it just means that those who are exercised in a path of conflict, and afflictions, and tribulation, and soul exercise, who are exercised at times with darkness, exercised with the Lord's silence, exercised with a sense of their own insufficiency, they are brought to know the truth experimentally. Otherwise, if we have never had a change of heart, if we have never been created anew, if we are destitute of life and faith, and yet know the truth in our judgment, it is not teaching to profit.

Now, cannot some of you see the connection between the conflict in your continuing in the world against the world, the flesh and the devil, and the teaching of the Spirit that has taught you the truth in your own experience? You can connect that, as you look at your life's journey, and you look at the truth as it is in Jesus, and see how you came by it. As, for instance, how have you learned the all-sufficiency of divine grace? It is in the Word of God, but have you learned it in word only? There is no power in it – you don't know the power of truth. But if you have been taught the all-sufficiency and invincibility of the grace of God, it has been in the same way that Paul learnt it, and yet he continued. He had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, that brought him down to utter weakness, and a desire three times that it might be extracted, but the Lord gave him something better than removing the thorn: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) He learned the strength and sufficiency of God's grace through his weakness, and therefore out of weakness he was made strong. Therefore, in his

continuing by living faith in the word, he not only manifested himself to be a disciple indeed, but he thereby learned the truth.

And again, how have we learned the truth that the Lord Jesus is a Redeemer, and that His precious blood is infallible in its efficacy to relieve guilt, to pardon sin? The only way that the Holy Spirit will teach that truth to profit is, in the first place, by reducing a soul to sinnership, to bring him where the Apostle was brought: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And then he could say, as his faith got a view of the Redeemer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 7:24-25) But it is through that opposition, that power, that law that is in our members of sin and death, which holds us in captivity and bondage, that we are brought to know the blessed power of the truth and the liberty of the Gospel. You connect these things up in your experience, and see how you came to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, who is the Truth, the Sun and Substance, the Centre and Circumference of the whole Gospel, in Whom all the fulness dwells, and you will find that your knowledge was by the Holy Spirit leading you into the truth of the opposite in yourself, and making you feel your need, and making room in your heart for the Lord Jesus.

"And ye shall know the truth" – know it as the Gospel comes in divine power, not merely in the word. You can read this chapter and the beautiful 14th chapter of this Gospel, and understand the literary meaning of it, and yet it have no power at all. We need our strength to be weakened in the way, that we may know more of the power of God turning our strength into weakness, to behold His suitability and all-sufficiency for our case, to know it in the opposites that meet. O my friends, what should we do if it were otherwise, if the Lord should look down from heaven and seek us in natural things for a righteous people worthy of Him? O, but how amazing it is, and a faithful saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15)

And this will help us to continue, and say with David: "It is good for me to draw near to God." (Psalm 73:28) We lost our happiness when we fell in Adam. The Lord Jesus restores the happiness which He took not away. He restores our righteousness which He took not away. "And ye shall know it" – that is the thing. And we shall know, too, this truth in the opposite of it, that, whereas our condition as sinners is complete and that our whole being is impregnated with sin in every fibre, yet there is a completeness which is greater than the completeness of sin. It is a blessed sight. I believe I have had a glimpse of it, which has enabled me to continue in the truth, and hold fast the profession of faith, to see that complete righteousness, complete atonement, complete salvation, complete holiness in Christ, and that to be communicated to, and put upon poor sinners. O, ye shall know it! – know it by imputation. O, says Paul, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13:14) It is a blessed expression. I would, if I could, put Him on like clothing – "the whole armour of God." "And the truth shall make you free." Not free from the being of sin, but free from its dominion, its condemning power, free from the law, not to disobey it, but ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ, and ye shall know that. The Lord Jesus having satisfied the law completely, having fulfilled every jot and tittle in it, so that it leaves neither spot nor wrinkle, having gone to the end of the law and magnified it, therefore the law has nothing to do with a sinner now. Ye are free from it because Christ has fulfilled its demands, so that that great truth repeatedly and blessedly comes before us. The whole secret is union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and such union is made possible by His infinite condescension – real union, as real as the head is to the body, as the branches are to the root, as the

husband is to the wife. "And ye shall know it." O my friends, seek for knowledge in your experience, in the heart – it is heart work.

"And the truth shall make you free." The Gospel is the perfect law of liberty, a perfect law. It is a perfect authority, it is a perfect law of liberty, because of the infinite perfection of God in Christ, and the infinite perfection of God, the Holy Ghost, and the authority of the Trinity is in the Gospel. And this will liberate a soul, and ye shall know it, and the truth shall make you free. Free from the dominion of sin, free from the condemnation of the law; and not only free from things, but a blessed liberty to things. It will make you free, and give you liberty and access to God through Jesus Christ, give you a freedom and liberty and right to enter in through the gate into the City.

O that this freedom through a knowledge of the truth might be effected in the hearts of some of you who are really brought to see and feel your need of Christ, and are seeking for Him, asking that you might receive, seeking that you might find, daily knocking at mercy's door for it to be opened! O may He enable you to continue to ask, seek and knock, until you know the truth – that is, until the Lord manifests Himself unto you in Jesus, what He is! And that is what you will need. Is He a refuge? You want Him to be your refuge. Is He a Saviour of the lost? You need Him to save you. Does His precious blood cleanse from all sin? You need that precious blood to cleanse you. You desire and seek to possess the things you profess – you want them. "And ye shall know it." Yes,

"The time of love will come,
When you shall clearly see,
Not only that He shed His blood,
But you shall say, '*For me*'".

(Gadsby's 330)

And that will make you free. Yes, free at the throne of grace, free to open your mouth wide. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," that is in this continuing and pressing on. (Matthew 11:28) And it will make you free in prayer. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." There is plenty in Him, a fulness of grace and life and truth and mercy and redemption in Him: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10) O, how sweet is this liberty of the Gospel! "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein...this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25) Some look and go away and forget what kind of man he was, a forgetful hearer; but some look with the eye of faith and see such things that, could they but possess them, they would be rich to eternity, would possess the kingdom, see the blessedness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, see divine pardon, a finished salvation, and then continue to look. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And the truth will make you free at last, the truth of Christ's resurrection will make you free. Says He: "Because I live, ye shall live also" – make you entirely free from a body of sin and death. O, to know the truth of the Lord Jesus, in His Person and work, in His blessed death and glorious resurrection, and to be united in Him by an eternal union, so that all that He is and all that He has is ours!

Amen.