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Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Lord's Day morning, 14th May 1967

"Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; Thy throne from generation to generation. Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time? Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned, renew our days as of old." Lamentations 5:19-21

Here, by faith, Jeremiah casts an anchor into the Rock of Ages. The beauty and blessedness of this declaration of faith, for such it is, is that it follows these Lamentations, and that enhances the beauty of faith, the value of faith, the power of faith, I have lately read some of these Lamentations and they are to me most blessed, they are full of living movement. I see as much beauty in these Lamentations as I do in the 103rd Psalm. O the life, the strugglings of faith, the tears, spiritual tears, the heavenly groans. If there was more of this today in Zion, there would be the hope of a real Revival; I could commend the reading of these Lamentations. Some might say 'Well, very miserable if that is your conclusion.' I am very sorry for you. O there is a beauty; they are exquisite; these lamentations will express your soul's exercise and feelings if you have like precious faith. Even this last chapter: "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us; consider and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens." It was the reproach of famine really. There was a bewildering also, because the gold had become dim." The most fine gold is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! Also there was a mourning because few came to the solemn feasts; if you can read these Lamentations and find no counterpart in your own hearts then you have a lot to learn. My friends, we have to pass through sorrows to joy, death to life. We have to go through the warfare to victory, it is the way. But it is a blessed finish to these Lamentations,

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever,' and each word deserves our careful consideration. It does not say "The Lord remainest for ever,' which is quite true; but you look at the exercises of his soul - "Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever." As though he is before the Lord and has been before Him in all these bewildering of this pitiful estate of Zion, and the desolations that abound. He sees that this great Lord was in the midst of them and as we sometimes say, so I believe, that the conflicts and warfare, the tempests and tossings, the calamities and sorrows of the way, by the Spirit, bring us to that one point of rest and bring them to see that there is but one Foundation, the Rock of Ages.

'Thou, O Lord.' This is Jehovah, the infinite, incomprehensible God; He whose sovereignty controls the whole universe - He who created it. 'Thou, O Lord.' David, saw Him, he went in and sat before the Lord. When the Lord had shown him that He would bless his house for ever, he went in and sat before the Lord. So that it is more than a mere nominal belief in a God that is revealed in the letter of the Scriptures. There is some humbling acquaintance with Him by faith; and we might well consider our knowledge of the truth and of the God of truth, and whether we know what it is to sit before Him, come into His house and sit before this great God, O how different things look then from when we view them with our natural eyes and mind! We see things as God sees them.

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever.' There was much done. If you read in the Lamentations you will see that there was much purged out, much was lost. But nothing can be lost that is spiritual. Nothing can be lost that is the work of the Holy Ghost. True, the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is, and the Lord tries His people;

But grace though the smallest, shall surely be tried. (Gadsby's 297)

But though painful, we need not fear being put into the fire. It will never burn gold, silver, or precious stones they come out the finer for whatever is gone 'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever.' In the year that King Uzziah died – it was a national calamity, a serious calamity, but that is all that is said about the King Uzziah because the Lord gave Isaiah a vision to see a greater King than Uzziah on a throne high and lifted up, where he saw the glory of God in Christ. And so here it was the same faith, the same voice 'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever.' Nothing can alter that. That is the foundation. What other foundation is there? What power is there in this world greater than the power of man speaking naturally? There is no greater creature to deal with than manifestly great men of the earth; the governments of this world. But look at them! We should honour them; "honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king." We should honour all men because they are created in the image of God, but we cannot love all men. We are to love the brotherhood. But I say, the mighty men of this world, though we should honour them in the person, the position that God has appointed to them, yet look at it, they all die and in that very day their thoughts perish, nothing remains. Take your eyes off the greatest of men, the greatest calamities and what we have before us in this nation God only knows. His judgments are ripening fast; but whatever comes, whatever is removed both nationally and in our personal cases, nothing, nothing can alter this text: 'Thou O Lord remainest.' Jehovah, infinite, whose sovereignty is absolute, O that is the Rock! His sovereignty is absolute;

*He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be. (Gadsby's 4)*

Jeremiah's faith was fixed upon Him. That could very well be in this text as in the 57th Psalm, where the poor psalmist was so troubled and yet sought to take refuge under the wings of the Almighty. He said, "My soul is among lions," but almost instantly he cried out, "My heart is fixed, O Lord, My heart is fixed." The eyes of his faith caught another Object and his eyes were fixed upon this Almighty God.

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever.' It has in it that same declaration of sovereignty that we have in Malachi: "I am the Lord, I change not," therefore because I change not and because I am what am, "therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed;" otherwise you would be. There is only one reason why you are not because I am the Lord absolutely; Lord of Lords, King of Kings, therefore ye are not consumed. 'Thou, O Lord remainest for ever,' and He remains the same for ever. Not only is He immutable but He remained what He ever was, and that with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Owen that says this, and I have admired it; 'When the Lord Jesus became Man, He became what he was not before, but He did not cease to be what He was.' There was no change, because that 'Holy Thing' that was born of the virgin Mary was not a person, otherwise there would have been confusion. It was a nature, and He took that nature into union with His divine Person. He did not change; His Deity is the same. Therefore it is a great declaration and full of comfort; "Jesus Christ,

the same yesterday, today, and for ever." We do well to consider whether these eternal truths are the experience of our souls. We do well to consider whether these things are just statements, or whether the Holy Ghost has made a connexion between these eternal truths and the experience of our souls' salvation.

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever.' Well then, there is this - seeing that is so, and there is a people that are in union with Him, there are partakers of benefits of His eternity, of His immutability. You think of that. Ah, it will make you enquire: Have I union? Have I union with the Church's living Head? O what a mystery that this remaining God; this 'immutable God can be known by poor, insignificant, unworthy sinners and taken into union with Him so as to receive the benefits of all that He is in His eternity.

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever,' and, it is because of this that the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant. Nothing would be everlasting except for the everlasting God and then to think that this everlasting God should send His eternal Son that these everlasting blessings and favours should be conferred upon men. It will bring you to pray, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour Thou bearest to Thy people." Whatever else I may lack; whatever I may lose, remember me with that same favour; Visit me with the same salvation.

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever' and that foundation was laid in the covenant of grace. It remains, nothing is altered. It is impossible for God to have second thoughts; His infinite mind can never be changed, and therefore, His love remains for ever - everlasting love. The grace of Christ is invincible grace and it will remain for ever. Don't you need that which is invincible? I do, I need that which is stronger than I am. O how willingly I would be conquered by grace, to feel an inward conquest of divine grace. It remains. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, it never alters, and the streams of His mercy grace and love will never be diverted from its object to another. All this is the stability of the Covenant of Grace. It remains. All the changing scenes that pass through the world from generation to generation, all the different inventions of men and even all the powers of Atheists, and Romanists and Communists and every evil cannot affect in the slightest this great God. He remains the same.

It is a great comfort as I view it. Everything else is changing and I suppose would be judged as improving. There are great discoveries in science and many of them we ought to be thankful for. I would not discourage human learning at all. Look at the benefits in hospitals of some of the inventions and discoveries, but my friends, when we come to the Word of God and our souls and eternity, we need something different. You see there are limitations even to those sciences that are for the benefit of mankind. How many go into hospital and are sent out because they can do nothing for them. But when we come to the things of God there is a foundation, the infinite perfections of Jehovah. No impossibility with Him at all. It is a different thing to have faith in God, a great thing. To believe that He is, not only because the Bible says so but because you have proved it in your own experience; and He remains, remains the same.

Many things are altered in our lives, friends, loved ones might be removed from us and in the providence of God there may be changes that bring a different outlook to our lives entirely, but He is the same, He changes not. It is good amidst all the effects upon us of the changing scenes of life, to

go in secret from time to time and sit before this great God, who remains, when everything else is gone. Of course, some of our dear young people we could not expect to follow this experimentally, but if they live and are taught by the Spirit they will. You will find that it comes through all the changing scenes of these Lamentations, there would not be nearly the beauty in this text if it was not that it concludes the Lamentations. His anchor cast into the cleft of the Rock.

'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever. Thy throne from generation to generation.' There is a throne; this does not so much mean here the throne of grace although it most blessedly includes it. But in the first place, connected with His immutability it represents the Throne of His infinite Being. If it was not that, it would be precarious. That is, the Throne upon which God sits is His own infinite, incomprehensible Being and from that Throne, in His divine and absolute sovereignty, He controls every event and life's minutest circumstance. He is a great God. I do try to speak of Him, but I shall never do it neither will anybody else. O He is unspeakably glorious! - But we may attempt it.

"Thy throne from generation to generation.' One generation shall pass away and another generation cometh. It has been so and will be so to the end of time. Marriages, births and deaths, and we see the young people and dear children coming along and soon the years will go by and they will see their children, but here is a declaration for the comfort of those generations to come - 'From generation to generation.' There is a word in the 102nd Psalm which is much to this point. It says there, "He will hear the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer, this shall be written for the generations to come and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord." So that we have scriptural grounds to believe that in every generation the Lord will have His people and will have authority in the world. Everything in the world will eventually be made subject to Him, for the glory of His name and the good of His church. It is now. It is also a comfort that a poor dying, frail creature can have communion with this eternal God.

I think we have pointed it out before, in that 102nd Psalm we see the two things together, the same Lord that is in the text: the Psalmist said, "My days are like a shadow that declineth, I am withered like grass, but Thou O Lord, shalt endure for ever, thy remembrance to all generations. Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion." There was a frail creature before this remaining God. You can see how the Psalmist there felt it and for his comfort. "I am withered like grass, but Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever;" and His people endure in Him, and as He remains for ever so shall they even through death to eternity. It will help you to look, in your calamities, your disappointments, your frustrations, with composure and come to this conclusion in the worst of your experience, in the most trying part of your pathway 'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever, Thy throne,- thy authority -is from generation to generation.' That is a ground to pray for succeeding generations, pray for our children; remind the Lord, bring His word to Him.

Well then, Jeremiah, he drops back: 'Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever and forsake us so long time?' There is something so real, so experimental in this. In the 19th verse his heart, his faith is fixed upon the Lord, but in the 20th verse, he is in a relapse. But he is still in the wilderness and some of you may know what it is to realise the desolations in your own soul and the conflict that is within; united trials that are without, the waves and billows are still rolling high and yet you have a view of this remaining Lord in which you anchor. It is like one that is upon a rock, the Rock Christ

Jesus, but the waves and billows are dashing upon that Rock. Ah my friends, the work of grace in the heart and a gracious experience is not just mechanical.

You take, for instance, the case of Peter; it comes right into this 20th verse. His eyes saw the Lord on the sea, he said, "If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee. He said, come" and Peter's eyes were upon this remaining Lord and he walked quite well on the waves, but then he comes to the 20th verse - O he took his eyes off the Lord and looked at the waves and he began to sink. 'Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever and forsake us so long time?' O that touches the divine sympathy of the Lord Jesus, it does, it is music in his ears. "Yea, He loved the people, all the saints are in His hand." So it brought him to this prayer, 'Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned, renew our days as of old. Turn Thou us unto Thee.' O his faith beholds the all sufficient God. This glorious Lord, whose is the heaven and the earth, the fullness of creation, the controller of every providence, the fullness of salvation, the fullness of grace. 'Turn us unto Thee.' Turn us away from self; and so Hart's advice is good,

*"Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower;
Look to Jesus, kind and strong
Mercy joined with power. (Gadsby's 780)*

Of course, we want to look at ourselves long enough - pore not on yourself too long - but you want to pore on yourself long enough; and the Lord will see that you do so, that you come to the end of yourself, then you look to Jesus, kind and strong and prove that His mercy is not helpless mercy but mercy joined with power.

'Turn Thou us unto Thee.' It is the same thing as we have in Solomon's Song really. "Draw me, and we will run after Thee", and there are ways by which the Lord turns His troubled people. One is that He draws them and the Holy Spirit reveals the suitability of Christ. He gives you to see in Him exactly the opposite to what you are in yourself; to see Him in all His unsearchable riches and those riches are not like gold which can become dimmed, gold which really is only a token. If you had a sackful of golden sovereigns, and you came down from an aeroplane into a desert place, they would not be a bit or good to you, you could not eat them, and you could not put them on. No, His unsearchable riches are riches that enrich the soul with life, with light, with grace, with holiness, and this draws - the attractions of Christ! But that attraction only attracts the like nature, life attracts life, and it was life in Jeremiah that longed for the Lord to turn him. 'Turn Thou us unto Thee.'

O have you ever by faith seen that all-sufficiency that is in God in Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit, and it has attracted your heart so that your soul has followed hard after Him? You have beheld His righteousness which is to full perfection. That beauty of the Lord, that glorious dress that He puts upon His people, and makes them righteous, justified freely through His grace, and your soul goes out toward it. It eclipses everything in this world; it brings all heaven before your eyes. It makes grace, grace to be a charming sound in your heart; His mercy sweet and His salvation great. O, to turn to the Lord. It is the only cure, in the 37th Psalm which is a comfort to sinners in conflict "Let not your heart envy sinners," but trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. "Delight thyself in the Lord, rest in the Lord, commit thy way unto the Lord", and that is when faith is toward Him. O how it attracts!

You may have felt that sacred mysterious influence upon your heart, drawing you away from self and the world and all its influences, and bringing you into the banqueting house. 'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever, Thy throne from generation to generation.' So He ever liveth; He remains the same great High Priest. He remains the great Shepherd of the sheep. He remains the Redeemer of His people, He remains in all the omnipotence of His power; and it is the ground of hope and the ground to come boldly to the throne of grace, because He remains.

'Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.' This is a willingness. I believe that Hezekiah, when the Lord sent that message to him, "Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live," turned his face to the wall. A mysterious expression, but some of you may know what it is. He turned his face away from everything and every creature to the Lord Himself. I believe I remember this in hospital in 1932. I always liked a corner in a hospital ward if I could have it. Turn your face to the wall under a sense of all your weakness and pain and distress and then to behold this great God; and He remains.

'Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Renew our days as of old.' Well, the days of a first love are very sweet. Because he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow, and that is very true. Especially if we are brought to know things about churches and denominations, he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow. But in the early days of youth when we had not knowledge of those things, there was a sweet simplicity. I have often been thankful for those days when I was unknown and knew nobody else. How I walked those country roads, not distracted with extraneous matters, but I had an aching void which the world could not fill. I wanted God, I needed salvation. Job felt the same, he remembered the days of his youth when the candle of the Lord shined about his head, and when by God's light he walked through darkness. Well, it is good to remember it. I have been greatly tempted and harassed that my religion is official, that if it was not for some position and the preaching of the Gospel, I should not read much of the Bible or trouble myself much about it. Very tried I was on one occasion but the days of old were brought to my memory. I turned to the devil and said, not much official about that was there? - those tender days, when all we wanted was to find the Lord. "O that I knew where I might find Him."

Well, He is the same, and so it takes in the whole of the text, 'Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever, thy throne from generation to generation. Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever and forsake us so long time? Turn, Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned, renew our days as of old.'

Amen.