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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed"
Chapel, Brighton, Sunday evening, 17th July 66

"Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh
at an hour when ye think not".

Luke 12. v.40.

Even to those that are possessed of living faith there are many Scriptures which they do not fully enter into until they are brought into those particular circumstances. Some of you will have proved that to be so. Indeed, as we go on in life, when we are younger and if we have the fear of God in our hearts we shall believe what the Word declares, but we shall live to prove that we must believe it twice; first believe it because it is the Word of God, but believe it the second time because we have passed through it in experience.

When you come to look at the preceding context of this text you will see what I mean. When death is brought near to us, especially so unexpectedly, if we have anything of a tender conscience it will make such a chapter as this to have a new meaning, but we shall see it with clearer understanding. "Rather seek ye the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you...Sell that ye have and give alms..provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth". Well, we believe it and those that fear God desire to walk according to it, but when we have fresh evidences come before our eyes that everything in this world is fading and failing and corrupting and thieves might steal it, O how it does set before us in a very solemn yet blessed relief those eternal realities of the Gospel that can never perish and to lay up for ourselves a treasure in heaven.

I do feel that when these solemn visitations come it gives a fresh impetus to our faith to walk in the direction of these exhortations.

"For where your treasure is there will your heart be also", is a very close word. We may pass that over many times but when we come face to face with eternity it may be a very searching question as to where our treasure is; whether it is in this earth or whether it is in heaven, and we shall know where it is if we consider where our hearts are. Therefore, says Paul, by the Spirit to the Colossians, "Set your affection on things above not upon things on the earth, for ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God and when He Who is your life cometh then shall ye be with Him in glory", let your loins be girded about and your lights burning". Well, in our usual frame of mind from day to day is that our exercise? if we look at the week that is passed has it been that our loins are girded about and our lights burning so as to appear to be the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid? These are questions to my mind that are afresh spoken to us under these solemn dispensations. It is the Lord's voice, it is His solemn knockings.

"Be ye therefore ready also for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not". The second coming of the Lord Jesus is of vast importance, it is clearly revealed in the Word of God. But what concerns us personally is the Lord's coming to remove us from this world, the day of our death, that is the most important coming to us. Then "as the tree falls so it shall lie" and as death leaves us so judgement will find us. O do we truly realise the importance of a preparation for eternity? Of necessity we make preparation for life, we must do so, it is right, We make appointments and should keep those appointments conscientiously. We have our responsibilities

in business and we should discharge them. But O what foolishness if we make arrangements and appointments for everything as we pass through this world and have made no preparation for the last appointment, for Solomon concludes the Ecclesiastes, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter". We have many conclusions to make as we go along. We must come to conclusions with respect to our responsibilities and business and so on, and we may come to conclusions with our providences and they may be very wrong conclusions; for Solomon again says, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof" and that is often true with respect to the Lord's people in their ordinary matters, their anxieties. The beginning of many things might be with much fear and anxiety and yet end successfully. Many things may be begun with great confidence and hope and end in disappointment, and so there are conclusions, not of the whole matter, but of concerns through life; but Solomon, he brings the conclusion of the whole thing: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" and that is when we come to the end. The conclusion with respect to the wicked will be exceedingly solemn. The whole conclusion of the joys, the profits, the positions, the honours, the attainments of this world, will be eternal woe. The conclusion of the whole matter of the Lord's dear people will be an end of their tribulations, an end of their trials and conflicts, and what is more it will be the end of their sins. O it is a great mercy if the Lord makes eternity to us far more vast than time. If He makes our souls to become of far more importance than our bodies.

Well, if these few rambling remarks are true and I believe they are, then consider what a little attention really we pay to such exhortations as are in this chapter. But it will be a mercy if our death does not come to us as a thief in the night. In the Thessalonians Paul takes up the same theme, he says, "But ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief". Peter speaks of the same thing, he says, "Seeing therefore that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of Christ wherein the heavens being on fire shall melt with fervent heat, nevertheless, we" O that nevertheless ! nevertheless, notwithstanding the solemn conflagration, "Nevertheless we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" Well, when you come to look at that Scripture and then look into your heart and into your life, I believe searching of the Scriptures and our hearts by the Scriptures is very profitable to call our dying day to view from time to time. I don't know what you think about that, I know what I should have thought about it 60 years ago, I should have wished I had not come into the Chapel, but whatever you think and whatever you wish about it, it will come, there is no escaping it. There is only one certainty in life and that is death, and yet when it is considered under the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit and a sense of the Lord's presence in your soul, when by the wings of faith you are transported from the influence of this deathly world and get a little glimpse of the King in His beauty and are brought up near unto the gates of heaven, O it will have an attraction. Paul says, "I am in a straight betwixt two, to depart and to be with Christ which is far better", so that it really is an examination according to Paul to the Corinthians: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith". Not whether you can talk about it or whether you know about it, but whether you are in it, inside of it, and that faith is the Gospel itself. The life of Christ is vital, His righteousness, His precious blood.

"Be ye therefore ready also". Well, what is needed to be ready ? The first thing really in order to be safely taken to heaven is the incarnation of God's dear Son. To be ready is to be made in union with Him, to be born again, to be born of God, to be born from above, to have a new heart, to have the true light in your understanding, to be saved by grace. What other preparation can there be ? If this

work is not begun in us we shall never be prepared. Good works cannot prepare us. There were those who went about to establish their own righteousness because they were ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, they deceived themselves.

"Be ye therefore ready also", and we were reading in that wonderful chapter, the bride hath made herself ready. We need to be made meet for heaven, we need to have a title for heaven. That title for heaven is in the redeeming work, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. That title for heaven was sealed upon Calvary, and when He cried, "It is finished", it was finished for His people, and there they were given a title to heaven. But we need to be sanctified. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and we might well examine ourselves as to whether we have any ground to believe that by the Holy Spirit we are being sanctified and made fit to be with Christ in heaven, as to whether that great prayer is being answered on our behalf individually, "Father, I will, that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am that they may behold my glory." Have you ears to hear? I believe we said last Wednesday and although it might not be an acceptable declaration or observation with some, I venture to say it again, that there is a possibility of becoming Gospel-deafened or Gospel-hardened, and that is very solemn in view of eternity.

I know we might get into a very bad state of soul, very calm and earthy and comparatively deaf to the Gospel, but if you are the Lord's people He has ways and means to awaken you and to restore your hearing. But really there is so much preaching today that unless our souls are kept alive and we are kept near to the Lord, we hardly know what the man is saying. But how solemn that is, when we hear the solemn knocking, the visitations of the Lord suddenly coming very near to us.

"Be ye therefore ready also". So that we need to be born again and we need to be sanctified. The complete work is set out by Jude. "Sanctified by God the Father", that is, set apart in sovereign election, "Preserved in Jesus Christ", in Jesus, "When my feet made haste to hell", "and called" by the essential calling of the Holy Ghost. "Be ye therefore ready also". We shall need the graces of the Spirit, a complete Gospel. Paul said to the Colossians, ye are complete in Him, none will ever go to heaven unless they are complete, you will never be complete in yourself, but there is a fulness in Christ, a mediatorial fulness that lacks nothing. There is all the life that the church can need, all the mercy and grace, divine merit, all the wisdom and righteousness, all the unsearchable riches which is the price that the Lord paid for the redemption of His people, even His precious blood. There is nothing that the most abject sinner can need but what the Lord Jesus has to bestow.

"Be ye therefore ready also". Some of you may know what it is to feel to be ready for everything and anything but eternity. I know what it is, and when you look at your life and your conversation, your spirit, actions and transactions, you may feel ready to conclude that you fit yourself every day more and more for destruction. I know what it is to feel that - and we should if we were left alone, and therefore we do need the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost to work ~~out~~ our works in us, so that we may work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Sometimes there is a further^gance in this preparation for eternity as faith reads the Word of God, and traces the footsteps of the flock, and becomes compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses that have gone before, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off" and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. O to have that preparation

of a pilgrims heart, to be possessed of faith and live by faith upon the Son of God, and if we have this preparation there will be evidences of it. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me". O we shall need a new root, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, neither can a good tree bring forth corrupt fruit, by their fruits ye shall know them" and the reason why those trees can only bring forth their respective fruits is because nothing can raise above its own nature and, therefore, to be prepared for eternity is to be brought under the influence of the Holy Spirit's inward sanctifying grace.

"Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not", and that is solemn. With respect to our departed friend it was not as a thief in the night. I felt it to be a very blessed visit to Southampton on this occasion, our friend seemed at liberty to tell me a little of her experience and how she received divine pardon in her soul. Would death come to you, if it comes tonight, as a thief? Are you ready?

" Pause my soul, and ask the question,
Art thou ready to meet God?
Am I made a real Christian,
Washed in the Redeemers blood,
Have I union with the Churchs' living Head? "

There are the important questions, questions that have occupied the anxious minds of those that have gone before, and if those enquiries are in your heart it is a sign that you are not dead, although you may lack a full assurance of faith, of your interest in Christ, yet in your anxiety do you ever go before Him -

" When Thou my righteous Judge shall come
To call Thy ransomed people home
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless worm as I
Who sometimes am afraid to die
Be found at Thy right hand? "

It is a mercy if these things don't fade away and you give the Lord no rest until He answers your anxious petitions.

"This know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken into". But then we don't know the hour, it is a mercy that we don't, the future in every way is hidden from us. It may be that you would not be sitting so easily in your pew if you knew what was before you on the morrow. I know I am going a little out of my usual but this is the Lord's knockings, and it is our wisdom if we are brought to hear them; "Behold I stand at the door and knock". It may be some of you have had some very serious knockings in your body, and very serious in your relationships, or very serious in providence; "But behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me, and to him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me in my throne, as I also overcame and am sat down with My Father in His throne".

What do these Scriptures mean to us? We shall be accountable for this great gift, of the inspired Word of God, we shall be judged by it. "Be ye therefore ready also". If we are prepared we shall have some communications and communion with the Lord in our own souls. How can we expect to be in eternal glory and communion with the Lord if we know nothing of the preparation for it here below? I would say this carefully, that if the work of the Holy Ghost has prepared us for a right entrance into the Church of God here, that same preparation for the Church here is a

preparation for heaven. Have you ever thought of that ? you cannot separate the two. I say if the work of the Holy Ghost has so led and taught you, separated you from the world and united you unto Christ in the Gospel and to His people, then that preparation will stand at last. If you have rightly entered into the Church militant you will at last be gathered up into the Church triumphant. It is not a different Spirit's teaching and it is a consideration; and if there is this preparation, then Christ will make Himself the chiefest among ten thousand, He will make Himself precious to your soul, He will make you willing to suffer all things for His name. He will make you willing to forget those things which are behind and to press toward those things that are before, "To press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". That will be in the preparation. I say you will be prepared for Him here if you are prepared to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb, for the Lord does betroth His people in this life.

This is beautifully set forth in the 2nd chapter of Hosea: "I will betroth her unto Me in righteousness, I will betroth her unto Me in faithfulness, I will betroth her unto Me for ever". The engagement, the betrothal, the manifestation of His love, the union is wrought here below, the marriage is in heaven. Have you then that preparation, the wedding garment ? Have you ever felt it when you have come to the Lord's table ? solemn, sacred place. "The bride hath made herself ready". "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat", and if you examine yourself and examine the Lord's table you will see that everything provided on that table is for sinners, and the chief of sinners, not the righteous.

But there is a wedding garment. Very solemn it was for that man whom the Lord of the wedding saw who had not on a wedding garment. "How camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment ?" and he was speechless. O then if you consider what the means of grace have been made to you, what the Holy Ghost has wrought in your heart in the provision that He has made in Zion, if ever He has gathered up your affections and love toward Him, it is some indication that you are prepared for heaven. I would just like to repeat that, if you are rightly prepared for Church membership here, you are prepared for heaven, it is not a different work and you don't enter into different things. O there is heaven on earth ! The manifestations, the communications from the living Head of the Church down to His dear people is a part of heaven, I am sure it is. "He brought me to the banqueting house", "Draw me, we will run after Thee". "The Lord hath brought me into His chamber", and if ever you have felt that sacred, heavenly drawing upon your heart that your faith has responded to, and the Lord has brought you into His chambers, brought you into the chambers of His blessed Word and shown Himself through the lattices there, it is a preparation for heaven, it is indeed, and you will long to be there. It will give death a different look.

"Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not". Unexpectedly. I have sometimes wondered what we should do if we knew everything that should transpire from day to day, We would be distracted. I wonder what influence it would be upon our conduct and our conversation, wonder what difference it would have upon our actions and our transactions, if there could be handed to each one of us this evening, whatever age, however young, however old, a date, an hour when our end would come. But it is as certain to us as if it was so. The Lord said to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live". The sentence of death, it had such an affect upon Hezekiah, he knew it, everybody knows it, but the sentence came unexpectedly, he turned his face to the wall. What did he do subsequently when he got over it and the Lord gave him the promise of fifteen years ? O he did not do that which was answerable to the goodness of the Lord, he was not then looking at death and eternity, he looked at his mansion, at

his treasure, he sent for the Princes to come and admire them, what a difference it makes ! what a difference it would make to us !

I do think about our dear young people, I quite understand if you should say, well, whatever have we to do with all this. Well, what you do need, and what I would pray the Lord to help you to do is to seek Him, "Seek the Lord and His strength". To know Him is not only eternal life, but "It has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come".

I believe I have felt more sweetness in recognising and remembering the days of the wormwood and the gall and the many, many calamities and conflicts of soul, and yet to see the Lord in His divine sovereignty, in His undisturbed affairs, putting crooked things straight and making rough places plain. And so you will see it with respect to a body of sin and death, how in that very condition of wreckage and ruin the Lord will work by His Spirit in the heart, such a work that shall redound to His honour and glory.

"Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not". We should do well to live with eternity in view. "O that my people were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end".

Well, here is the word, "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not". May the Lord lay that prayer upon our hearts -

"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).