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Sermon preached by Mr. F.L. Gosden on the occasion of Miss F. Wilderspin's Baptism, Friday evening, 17th November 1967.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Amen.

Matthew 28 v.18-20.

These words of the Lord Jesus are of vital importance and consequence to the church of God, Where we have the divine commission from Christ Himself, risen from the dead, with all authority commissioned to preach the Gospel. Here though we have the authority for practising the ordinance of believer's baptism, which we are to observe here this evening. So that we need to take very careful heed to the things spoken by the Lord Jesus.

It would appear that this is almost the last thing that He said to His disciples concerning the ordinances of His house and the preaching of the Gospel. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". Now this power is a mediatorial power. It is not His omnipotence which belongs to Him as the infinite God, omnipotence could never be given to Him, He is the omnipotent God the Son. But this power is just the same as when in that wonderful prayer in the 17th John, He said unto His divine Father, "As Thou hast given Me power over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Me". It is a very blessed power. The distinction between this mediatorial power and His omnipotence is very blessed. It means this, that the work of salvation is not an act of naked omnipotence, but it is a work, and this power which was given to the Lord Jesus embraces also the virtue and power in victory of His finished work, that He satisfied the law, the condemning law. That He had condemned sin in His own flesh. That He being made sin, His people were made in Him the righteousness of God. So that this divine power as a Mediator given unto Him embraces the whole virtue and benefit and victory of His condescension to take human nature, His Person and His finished work.

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"; and it is an encouragement, an encouragement to faith, this declaration. Not only power in earth, but power in heaven; and that power that He has in heaven is the power of He Who is ascended on high, has led captivity captive and received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also. It is the power of His intercession; it is the power of His High Priesthood for He is still a great High Priest in heaven, and O the power of His intercession. He is a great High Priest and the greatness of His Priesthood is in His eternal Person. "This Man, because He continueth ever", unlike the Levitical priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood, their priesthood changed hands by reason of death: "But this Man, because He continueth ever", because of His eternal Person, hath an unchanging priesthood, therefore, "He is able", and here is the power, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him".

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". True, it does include His universal Lordship, but essentially it refers to His divine power in grace, His power in the Church, His power to save, His power to deliver. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". There is another thing about this power, it is communicable. Omnipotence cannot be communicated, but this mediatorial power can. You take it upon this wonderful point: it is said of Him, "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not, but as many as received

Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Now this power which can be communicated is set before His people and it is sufficient for the ministry, it is the only power that can save and it is the power of His resurrection in regeneration. The same power which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, the Holy Ghost applies in regeneration, quickening dead sinners into life. "All power", every kind of spiritual power in the Church, "Is given unto Me in heaven and in earth".

There is another, to my mind, very blessed thought, it is the same power He has in heaven that He exercises upon earth, and by this power He forgives sins. When they brought to Him the man taken in palsy, He said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee", and they murmured, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Then He showed His power: "Whether it is easier to say, son thy sins be forgiven thee, or take up thy bed and walk; that ye may know that the Son hath power on earth to forgive sins, He said, take up thy bed and walk". "All power". O poor weak sinners, those of you who have been brought to realise your sinful impotency, for our weakness is sinful, to have your eyes opened and to hear this blessed voice: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and every kind of power for every kind of weakness, and if we had time we could trace this through the Gospels. You take Peter. Peter was very bold, and he asked that if it was the Lord upon the tempestuous sea that he might go to Him, and the Lord said, come. He knew what He would do; and Peter, as he went to Him looked at the wind and waves and began to sink. "All power"; He will teach us that, "Is given unto Me", and it is to Him that you will have to go for power. O in our legality we are apt to look inside for everything, but if you have your eyes opened and look to yourself you will find nothing there, but sin, destruction and despair, nothing else.

But then He makes reference to the preaching of the Gospel and you take the connexion of the power, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore," because all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Well now, that has been an encouragement to some, I believe it has been to me in my poor feeble ministry. Why my friends, it is astonishing how we are apt to look about in ourselves just for something, and perhaps before a service we are reduced to absolutely nothing at all, I know what it is. But then if the Holy Spirit should whisper in a poor trembling minister's heart, "All power is given unto Me", not to you, "To Me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore", because the power is in Me, and what does that enable a poor weak sinner to do? Why, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of His righteousness, even of His only".

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore", O a blessed incentive, if it had been said, now, I have given you power, now you go in that power, what should we do? when we are brought to utter weakness? But you see the blessedness of the word: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations". In the margin it says, make disciples of all nations. Well the Lord may use the preaching of the Gospel to make disciples, it is His method, He has joined it together that "through the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe". It is a wonderful method, it has pleased God to use it, to send poor sinful men and use them as instruments to the fulfilling of His eternal purposes of grace in salvation, and it gives an importance to the preaching of the Gospel. It does not give any importance to a minister, but it does give a very great importance to the office of the minister and, therefore, we are warranted and you can pray and expect the Lord to work mightily through the preaching of the Gospel. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations", not merely in the locality where He was, but the Gospel was destined to reach to the ends of the world. "In them hath He set a tabernacle for the Son, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a strong man to run a race". A very blessed description of the preaching of the Gospel, the preaching of Christ under the power of the Holy Ghost; and Paul prayed for this, "Pray for us,

that the Word of God may have freecourse and be glorified". "Go ye therefore and teach all nations". So that a true minister, according to the word of God, should be apt to teach. Well, we feel our ignorance, we need the Lord to teach us that we may teach you, and would teach you with that teaching whereby we have been taught of God Himself. Things that we have tasted, handled and felt of the good word of life, and if we have tasted, handled and felt of the same then there will be a savour of life unto life in your soul, there will be that mighty contact of which we were trying to speak on Wednesday, because the secret of it is the work of the Holy Spirit first in conviction of sin. To be made a disciple and to follow the Lord will need a preparation, for no man naturally has a felt need of Him. No man naturally has any desire for Him. He is as a root out of a dry ground to the natural man, the natural heart. Therefore, in this teaching, in this preaching there will first of all be the conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost, this must be the first thing. For who will need salvation but those who know that they are lost? None will see any beauty in God's glorious Son but those who have been brought to see themselves and the filthiness of their own righteousness. Therefore, the first thing in this teaching is for the Holy Ghost to discover a sinner to himself, that is the first teaching. It is not generally known, only those know themselves who have been taught of the Spirit what they are; and what a revelation it is! for the Holy Ghost to shine and apply the holy law of God, it is a true light, it discovers everything that is wrong, it discovers death. It shows us our wreckage, our ruin, our pollution. This is teaching, and if we are under this divine commission because, "All power is given unto Christ", we shall turn every man to destruction. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, saith the Lord", what a mercy that is. How can we know anything, or understand anything of the mystery of the Gospel unless first of all we know something of the mystery of iniquity, the mystery, the solemn fact of the fall, so:

"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost has made him so".

Then that sinner is prepared for the Gospel. To be quickened into life is the first work of the Holy Ghost, and the first thing that life feels is its death. The first thing that opened eyes know is their blindness and then they are opened by the same Spirit to the glorious Gospel, everlasting Gospel of the grace of God. All power in the Gospel, all power in the preaching, all power in the individual hearts of sinners, is given unto Me, go ye therefore, the power is mine. Paul may plant, Apollos water, God must give the increase, and therefore faith looks up, up beyond the minister, looks up to heaven and hears the voice of the Lord Jesus: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". It does not say 'All power was given unto Me in heaven and in earth' but IS. The risen Lord, exalted above, interceding for His dear people, the same power is exercised in their hearts. This may be a great comfort to some of you who are brought to know your weakness. I remember several years ago, I have been brought there many times since, but when I was reduced to complete helplessness and destitution and desertion, I could not pray, I could not think. I kneeled down by a chair and was dumb. Perhaps you find it easy to pray; but this came into my heart, "The Lord Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us". If I remember right I think it was 3.15 in the afternoon and the thought came to me, He ever liveth, 3.15 this afternoon, to make intercession for us. O it will bring you up from the depths, and like Peter when he began to sink the Lord stretched forth His hand and caught him, and sometimes the Lord will catch your sinking soul by some sweet promise, may even be by this word, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". Well, what a great thing that is to have that evidence of life in your soul under the preaching of the Gospel. To have a living faith because you have life, a living hope, and if you have, there will be this under the preaching of the Gospel, a peculiar, inward, secret response to

what you hear, it will register. I have sometimes used the illustration and I do not want to use anything improper, but if you have a living faith and that faith in exercise under the preaching of the Gospel, there will be a reception, it will take the impression of the truth upon your heart. If you have not faith under the preaching of the Gospel, it will not register, it will have no effect, there will be no response, it will meet no need, it will meet no desire.

"Go ye therefore and teach all Nations." The proclamation of the Gospel, the sum and substance of it, is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the commencement of it in experience was the incarnation of God's dear Son. We could not possibly preach the Gospel without preaching that foundation truth, that God's eternal, only begotten Son, in the mystery of godliness, took human nature into union with His divine Person, there is the Foundation. He is the Rock. He would not be a Rock if He had not become incarnate, He would not be a door, He said, I am the door, there would be no door if He had not become incarnate. You will find that He will increase in your soul's experience in the preciousness of Him and that will be one evidence of being a believer, "Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious"; so that if the Lord Jesus is precious to you, you are a believer according to the Word of God. He manifests Himself, makes Himself precious through the preaching of the Gospel.

You take the case of which we have been reading. A very beautiful account that is, the eunuch and Philip. The eunuch evidently was exercised, reading about the sufferings of Christ, and the Lord sent Philip and said join thyself unto this chariot. Well now, for substance, the Lord says this to a minister concerning some particular individual in some particular pew, not in words, but as He leads the minister, and if the Lord in His purposes has one to whom the appointed time has come, He will lead that minister as though He said, join thyself to that person in that particular pew. "And Philip said unto him, dost thou know what thou readest?" O the honesty of this man's heart, his humility, not like some of our modern religionists who know everything and can manipulate their faith according to their own devices. "He said, how can I except some man teach me?".. "And he preached unto him Jesus." Now have not some of you found that as the Holy Ghost has opened your understanding to give you a sense of your deep need as a ruined sinner, together with a desire for the Lord Jesus, made Him precious to your soul, has there not been a preaching right into your heart of Jesus? We do feel, concerning our dear young friend by the testimony she was able to give us that that has been one effect of the preaching of the Gospel in her heart, and the Lord uses means, uses His providences and interlaces His providence with His grace, brings His people exceedingly low sometimes in affliction, brings them down to the grave, to the shadow of death, binds them in affliction and iron, and then gives them to know that "All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth". He brings them up from darkness and from the shadow of death and breaks their bands in sunder, O what a Lord He is ! "Go ye therefore and teach all nations", and then when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart there is a willingness: "My people shall be willing in the day of my power". Same power, and there is this about it my friends, that nothing will satisfy a spiritual hearer except power, and you will be brought to that point. I know there is a good deal of general talk about services, you might say well, I like Mr. so and so, and I don't much care for somebody else, but that is nothing to do with it, this will be in your heart if you have got a case, if you need deliverance, salvation, there must be power or it is no use to you whoever the man is. You will come, come with a case that only power can touch, can reach, can deliver, can save.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost". So that brings us to the ordinance of believer's baptism. It is for believers. "Philip said unto the Eunuch," when the eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised ?

There are many hindrances and it is a mercy when the love of God is so shed abroad in a poor sinner's that removes all the hindrances. There might be hindrances, One may say well, I am not worthy, Who will contradict you? If you are going to wait until you are worthy you will never come at all. You must find everything in Christ, you must find your worthiness in Him. Another might say, but I have not sufficient to go with: well, it depends what your little is, if what you have got is not of the Spirit, then it is true, but "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked". You know when Namaan the leper went to the man of God, he went in pride, he thought that the man of God would come out and command a blessing, but when he told him to go and wash, it was too easy, it was beneath his dignity; but they came to him and said, Master, if thou wast commanded to do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it? and there are some people who fear God are waiting for things that they have no warrant to wait for. "Philip said unto the eunuch, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest".

Well, there it is, and you know whether you believe with all your heart, you know whether Christ is precious. The Lord said to His disciples, "If ye love Me, keep my commandments", He did not say if I love you, that would be far more difficult. Why, you would look about you, you would look at your sin-stained life, then you would look at your unworthiness and you would say I do not see how the Lord could love me, but when He said, "If YE love Me", you know whether you do or not though you may feel the chief of sinners and the vilest of them all, you know whether you love the Lord Jesus.

Well, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them." There is no virtue whatever in the ordinance of believer's baptism, there are many in heaven who were never baptised, and there are some in hell that were baptised; Simon the sorcerer is one, and he is not the last one. There is no virtue in the water, it is water. There is no virtue in the bread and wine at the Lord's supper, none at all, they are symbols. But how blessed is this institution, a divine institution; and we would look for a moment at its significance. That is a point. What does it signify? It signifies the overwhelming sorrows and sufferings of the dear Redeemer. To be baptised is to be overwhelmed. You read the 69th Psalm, you will trace this as was spoken in the Spirit of prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus and all the waves and billows of divine wrath rolled over His sacred head, as we were singing just now, the grave of the Lord Jesus lies before us; and when a poor sinner is raised to a hope that all that the Lord Jesus in His love condescended to become, to accomplish, to suffer, that it was done for them, then they are willing to follow Him. I believe I said lately that those who object to baptism by immersion have not a single Scriptural proof to support their objection, not one. But O for faith to follow a suffering Saviour! "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, is there any sorrow like unto My sorrow?" When you consider that the whole was on account of sin and that the Lord Jesus, most Holy, glorious, divine, should submit to being made sin, that He should submit to the indignity of the cross and the reproach, that He the glorious Lord the Creator of heaven and earth, should allow men to take Him by wicked hands and crucify and slay Him. That He, in all the dignity of His Person should allow them to take Him into a common hall, His judgement was taken from Him, and if the blessed Spirit gives you to feel that everything He did was for you, you would feel like I have sometimes felt and said at the Lord's table, Are you worth it sinner? Are you worth it?

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
It were an offering far too small;
Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my strength, my all".

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". Three Persons in one glorious Godhead, and all are

concerned in salvation. The divine Father in His electing love, predestinating His people to the adoption of sons, the Father giving the election of grace to His dear Son, the Son in His redeeming love, seeing that no other ransom could be found condescended, delighted to come, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God", and O for faith to trace Him from the manger to the cross. It shows this, my friends, what a terrible, malignant disease sin is, nothing less would remove it, and it was for the removal of sin from the church that the Lord Jesus came. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son and of the Holy Ghost who quickens dead sinners into life. Who makes that vital union between sinners and the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost by Whom all communion is, the author of prayer, the author of faith, of hope, Who sheds abroad the love of God in the heart.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." O I have often thought and I have desired that I might hear when my expiring breath comes, to hear this "Ye are complete in Him". What else matters? O my friends, though I feel my poor ministry is feeble, yet the Gospel is not feeble, O the power of it! and have not some of you felt it, that the Gospel has not come to you in word only, not merely in the letter of it, ink and paper, but has come into your heart with power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. It has at times assured you that -

"I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given,
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

"Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always." Now this is a comfort to a minister and it is a comfort to His people. "Always". He is with you when you feel He is not. He is with you when you are in the belly of hell. He is with you as He was with Daniel in the lion's den. He is with you as He was with Joseph in the prison. "Always". O what a blessed thing it is to remember it when you are in the dark. When you are on the border of despair, and how this faith of His people has triumphed:

"Look from the border of the pit
To my recovering grace."

Why? "All power, every kind of power that you will need, "Is given unto Me", and is given unto Me to communicate to you by the Spirit. "And lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world", and nothing can alter that. O the sovereignty of God is absolute, it is not dependent upon any circumstances; whatever commotions are in the earth, whatever wars, or tumults, whatever conflict is in your poor heart, whatever convulsions may be in your circumstances, in your family, in the business, in your body, nothing can alter it, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world."

Amen.

Remarks at the pool.

This is a sacred ordinance, it is not for curious eyes, it is for faith and our dear sister in the day of the power of God was made willing to follow her suffering Saviour. Now there is an indignity in baptism, humiliation as viewed by nature and carnal reason, but yet that indignity and reproach and humiliation is very

beautiful, for was it no indignity to the Lord Jesus that He was crowned with thorns, His sacred head smitten with a reed ? and that He was stripped and hung upon the cross ?

"It was an easy part for Him the cross to fly,
But love to sinners touched His heart
And made Him choose to die."

There are many people would like to join a Church and escape this indignity which the Lord Himself endured, and reproach, but our sister has been made willing to follow her suffering Lord.

This is the way, walk ye in it.

My dear sister, upon your confession of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Hymns. 540
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(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).