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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel,
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"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself".

Philippians 3. v.20-21

Every part of the word of God has its particular beauty and character, bears its own eternal evidence of inspiration. The Epistle to the Philippians is a blessed word. Paul, he had a place in his heart for this Philippian church. He planted it by the Spirit through his own ministry, but this third chapter is both blessed and solemn. To me it has been very heart searching. I have often compared this 3rd chapter to the balances of the Sanctuary where we might weigh our religion to see what sort it is. Paul tells us that there were things that were gain to him that was in the Jews religion, he held high office among the Pharisees which was very profitable to him. His righteousness he thought was a gain to him, so much so that in his zeal he persecuted the church. He was a good living young man, "As touching the law he was blameless", but all this that looked so fine he counted loss for Christ, and I do feel, and that increasingly, that it is well to examine ourselves by the word of God, and find questions asked in our own conscience as to whether we have such an evidence as Paul of being born again. Because however great an apostle the apostle was, it is true what he said, "By the grace of God I am what I am". He needed the same Holy Ghost to quicken him as we need. But if we say that Christ is precious to us we can test that confession by what Paul says here; "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". He was precious to him. Can we say that? "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ?" How does our experience, our religion tally with that? "And be found in Him".

O he had the end in view, he knew by divine teaching that if he had that righteousness of a pharisee, he could never stand before God. "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law", but that which is through faith, the righteousness which is of God by faith, and so he rises in his desire, in his affections, in his needs, and did not stop, he rises higher, "That I may know Him", and he tells us what he means by knowing Him, "The power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death". Well, there is the pattern, there is the standard that which should be put to prove our own religion. I know you may feel really ill and sick under a sense of how short you come. I have. I felt so yesterday afternoon. I said to the Lord, I am ill with sin. But he comes down to the text.

"For our conversation is in heaven". But the two preceding verses shows a very solemn character. The opposite character. "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping". He did not rejoice to see those going to destruction, and these were professors, they walked. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things". Poor sinner, when you look at those you are almost ready to say that is me in the 19th verse. But that is the state of every unregenerated man and his end will be destruction. his God is his belly, he minds earthly things. No capacity for anything above self. Self is their object, their God, therefore the whole of their lives is to satisfy self.

Well, if the Lord has made us to differ we shall never be able to adequately thank Him. We shall never point a finger at the worst. I never

could. The only thing that I can say is, it is of the Lord's mercy that I have not been consumed long ago. But this text does try. "Our conversation is in heaven". This word, conversation, embraces the whole of our life, our conduct, our affections. "Where our treasure is there will our hearts be also". It is a citizenship. "Our citizenship is in heaven". If we are born again we are born from above, and if we have an inner man, a new man of grace, that man of grace lives from heaven. His life is from heaven, he can only feed on heavenly things, heavenly food. His end is heaven.

We were trying to speak a few things about the 107th Psalm. "He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation", their conversation is there, about the habitation, that is where Christ is, his interests are there, his God is there, his righteousness is there, his hope is there, his happiness is there. Is it? Is it? "Our conversation is in heaven".

Paul writing to the Hebrews says "Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave you nor forsake you". So that this conversation takes in the whole of a spiritual life, the whole of internal and external worship. "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. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then we shall also appear with Him in glory". I know if we have only natural ears, it will be a natural sound, but when faith hears such words as those, O what heaven is in them! what riches of grace! what immutable love!

"Our conversation is in heaven". And that conversation is inward meditation. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet". When you read the word of God, how do you read it? How long ago was it since it read you? How long ago did you have communion with the Lord in reading it? so that there was a conversation between your soul and God in His precious Word and your conversation was in heaven? Those chapters in John's Gospel 13 - 16 what blessed conversation the Lord had with His eleven disciples. There will be some conversation in your souls as you sit under the preaching of the Gospel and it will take up your affections and your desires and your needs, and you will feel at times that there is a contact between your soul and heaven. Your conversation is there.

It was so with Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee"; a great confession of faith that. You may be able to say it but once in your life. I have only said it once, in the fulness of it. Never forget it. You will not be able to say these things glibly. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". "Our conversation is in heaven". Moving that way, if you have a home where you lived once and you are far from it, you write all your letters home, your interest is there and so it will be as you journey through the wilderness. O there will be a laying up a treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves do not break through and steal. O what a portion! What a poor affair is a portion in this world, robbery with violence from day to day where thousands of pounds are stolen. Poor portion. But our conversation, our riches, are in heaven, durable riches and righteousness are there. Our inheritance is not here, we are not looking for somebody to die to possess an inheritance here, but there is an inheritance reserved in heaven, "incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away".

Our conversation, our portion, our inheritance, our God is in heaven". As David says in the 115th Psalm, showing the great difference between his God and idols: "Our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased". "Our conversation is in heaven", and sometimes it is actually. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another". I do wish there was more of this communion ¶ they spake one to another, a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His

name". They did not all speak, no, some of them could not. There are some gracious souls who cannot speak much, but they think upon His name. He does not make any difference between those that can, in the fear of God, speak to one another and those that only think upon His name, for He says, "They shall be mine..when I make up my jewels".

"Our conversation is in heaven". Is it ? Is it ? Is it not searching sometimes when you get an inward response ? "From whence also we look for the Saviour". Well that is, in this conversation, this life, this worship, this exercise in reading of God. Conversation in heaven in prayer, in secret prayer. "From whence", that is, from heaven, "Also we look for the Saviour". Well, who looks for a Saviour ? Not a Pharisee who does not need one, not the world, they are not lost, they are satisfied with the world. Who looks for a Saviour ? Why, poor lost sinners. It is a mercy to be lost, it is a mercy to be a sinner, a sinner by the Holy Spirit's teaching, I am sure it is. You will never need a Saviour or the Gospel until the Holy Spirit has taught you what you are. The Holy Ghost does not make people sinners but He shows them they are, and there is something very sacred about a convinced sinner, sinking in deep mire where there is no standing, when he is brought to that Rock that is higher than he; when he is given some assurance that sin is pardonable.

O I do believe this is the first consolation before he gets pardon, to realise by the Word, that sin is pardonable. Those two things did help me yesterday. "From the soul of your feet to the crown of your head ye are nought but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores", it was no exaggeration. Do you feel to be just in that condition ? But look at the Remedy, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool". This is when a sinner looks for a Saviour. "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ", and there is a promise to such. "Unto them that look for Him shall He come the second time without sin unto salvation".

Well, have you such a need of salvation that you look for a Saviour ? Do you ever look for Him when you read the Word of God ? Do you ever join with David in the 51st Psalm, O how he was looking for a Saviour, and how the blessed Spirit took him to the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Have you ever rejoiced to hear His voice ? "Who is like unto Thee that pardoneth iniquity, that passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance ?" He will subdue iniquity, and you take the Word to Him and ask Him to do it. There is a sweet simplicity in real religion. Do you ever take the Bible and take such a word as that and bow before Him and say, Lord, do it, it will do me no good to read it, Lord, do it.

"For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour", the Lord Jesus Christ"; and His salvation is just. His salvation is not a naked act of omnipotence. Salvation is a work, a work accomplished by God. God in human flesh. Salvation accomplished by a Man as well as God. Salvation that is perfect, acceptable to God. Salvation that has in it righteousness to full perfection. "From whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ".

Well, if you look for Him, you will one day see Him. That promise in Isaiah is a blessed promise: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off". It is very far off, but there are times when faith believes and faith brings distant prospects near. Brings all heaven before your eyes in the first foretastes of it. Now all this is conversation, it is conversation in heaven, and your conversation may be even though when you are busily occupied walking down the street, surrounded with this world. Have you not ever found an influence in your heart that lifts up your soul above all the rabble and noise ? What a mercy it is to have the life of

God in the soul, but although it is so very solemn I am thankful that we have this warning here: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ". You will not turn away from it and say well, that is not me, but you will say, "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe".

"Who shall change our vile body". This is one of the most amazing declarations in salvation. I could but feel it when we were committing our dear friend to the grave last Thursday. The soul is safely garnered in heaven, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord", but the Lord has not finished with the body, I do feel that if this truth, as any other truth, should be impressed upon our hearts by the Spirit, it would take away the fear of death. There are some dear souls who all their lifetime are in bondage through fear of death, I know what it is, but the body is to be redeemed as well as the soul. "Who shall change our vile body". It is a vile body, sin has made it vile. It was not created a vile body, beautiful body it was created, it could know no corruption as it was created. Man would never have died if he had continued as he was created, he was immortal, and he is immortal still, but sin entered. O you will not need to look about and try to work it out how sin has entered, you will be like the publican in the temple that smote upon his breast, he knew all about sin and our hymn describes it wonderfully -

"The dire contagion fills the veins
And spreads the poison to the heart".

Do you know it? Has it spread its poison to your heart and killed you? Well, if it has there is only one remedy and it is such a remedy as that sin has spread the poison to the heart, so you need the Holy Ghost to bring the pure, everlasting, rich, blessed Gospel to spread the life, its blessings to your heart, a Gospel transfusion; is not that just what some of you want? We hear of a blood transfusion, you want a Gospel transfusion by the blessed Spirit bringing into your soul the whole of Christ, the merits of His Person, the efficacy and virtue of His precious blood, the power of His divine grace, the sweetness of His mercy, the riches of redemption.

It is a vile body, but it is to be fashioned, not to be transformed into an angel, a spirit, but to be fashioned like unto His glorious body, His glorified body. The Lord Jesus, when He assumed human nature, He never was separated from the human nature, sacred, sinless humanity, and

That same dear Man in heaven now reigns,
Who suffered for our sakes".

What a tremendous thing sin must be that nothing less than God's co-equal and glorious Son should be delivered up into the hands of wicked men, should come to this world to be despised and rejected of men, to be a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, Who died an ignominious death and yet got the victory by His life, in His death, and that victory He gives to His people. But this vile body that we lay in the tomb is to be fashioned like unto His glorious body, now that is as certain as the Word of God is true, it must come to pass, truly "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord", it belongs to them. What is sown in corruption, in the vileness of corruption, shall be raised in incorruption, that which we sow in dishonour, in all the dishonour of the affects of sin which brought it to the grave, shall be raised in glory, and therefore, those two great questions are answered: "O death where is thy sting?" the sting of death was extracted by Christ on Calvary. "O grave where is thy victory?" The victory of the grave for His dear people was when the Lord Jesus was raised from the Tomb and His people were "Raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". You see the connexion of those that die in the Lord. "Who shall change our vile body" Speaking of the resurrection of Christ, the mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, now His people were in

Him, and as He was thus raised, so were they with Him, and they are raised up this far, "Above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in the world but also in that which is to come", then it goes on to say the same thing as is in the text, "Whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself". To the Ephesians it says, "And hath put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church". O rich people, and this is the prospect of the saints !

But how solemn, how solemn for those who live and die in the 19th verse: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things". What a mercy it would be if the blessed Spirit should take these discriminating words and make them as an arrow in the consciences of some of our dear young people. Death is inescapable. The things concerning eternity are certain, there is nothing in this world that is certain, and if we consider our latter end it will not make you worse parents or children, servants, or masters, I am sure of it. To attend to our daily duties under the influence of the grace of God is to have our conversation in heaven. It does not mean that we are always talking about religion. I believe from a little experience, that you can have your conversation in heaven while you are doing business. Feel the tender fear of God so lively in your conscience that it keeps the door of your lips, it preserves you in integrity and uprightness in all your actions and transactions and thereby your conversation, while you do business, is in heaven; and sometimes there will be a receiving of the end of faith even the salvation of your souls, before you get to the end. You will have a sweet confirmation that when you come to the end by the grace of God you shall enter into glory.

O it is sweet at times, especially when you are under the weight of a carnal mind, doubts and fears, for a little sun to shine through the clouds and give to you a renewed hope -

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

It is beautiful language, they are more happy but they are not more secure than this poor people who are looking for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ..

"Who shall change our vile body". O that it is changeable is wonderful ! the perfection of Christ, His glorified body, a body exactly like His. We cannot partake of Deity, but to have a body perfect no mortal decay, no death, no weariness, no infirmities, filled with the Spirit, filled with infinite, divine wisdom, a knowledge of God, although through the whole of eternity there will be a fuller and fuller knowledge of Him Who is incomprehensible.

"Who shall change our vile body that it might be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able to subdue" everything. He subdued the grave, and this word is written over the grave of every child of His, sin which brought you to the grave shall not have dominion over you, "For ye are not under the law but under grace", and grace shall reign, grace shall reign through righteousness, right through and beyond the grave into eternal life.

Why my friends, to have a good hope of those who are taken from us is cause for rejoicing, all these Scriptures must be fulfilled in their case.

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).