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Sermon preached by Mr.F.L.Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Friday Evening, May 11th 1962

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7.

It is important to remember that these Epistles are written to spiritual people, and it would be very wrong to exhort the wicked to 'be careful for nothing.' But this is the word of the Lord, a kind word, to His dear people. The text really is an amplification of the preceding verse: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Moderation is to be sober, and the reason, the ground of it is - "the Lord is at hand." The 6th verse tells us what it is to be moderate, to be temperate. It is one of those virtues of which Peter speaks: "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance," or moderation. The word that the Lord spoke to Martha had the same teaching in it. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." and that one thing outweighs the many things, and "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' Therefore the foundation upon which this exhortation stands is God Himself: "The Lord is at hand." Whatever is wrong, whatever your difficulties or sorrows, the Lord is at hand; so be careful for nothing. Nowhere in the Word of God is carelessness inculcated, and it is not in the text. 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything.' There is a sense, although it appears a contradiction - but there is a sense in which everything and nothing are commensurate, the same size; the one fits the other. If you had a quart jug, but there was something in it, you would not get a quart of water in it; but you must have a quart of nothing, or it would not fit. And the Lord fits these two things together: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything."

Well, we are immoderate creatures, immoderate in our nature. We go to excesses in every direction, and it dishonours the Lord; and we would look as enabled at some things out of the 'everything' that we should not be careful about, but in all which we should pray about. When you consider one single individual, their life from the cradle to the grave is an amazing tale that is told; for "we spend our years as a tale that is told." But especially the Lord's people who are set on pilgrimage, like those in the 107th Psalm and in the 11th to the Hebrews. See the way that they were led, though a right way. Every one of them was in trouble; every one of them was brought to the end of their own strength, their own resources, their own wisdom. Therefore this text on the face of it is very difficult; indeed impossible except unto faith, and it is only faith that can walk this way. Paul says to the Corinthians, "We walk by faith, not by sight."

Then again, oh what concerns there are: Not only the ordinary concerns naturally, which belong to the whole human race; but the concerns of the Lord's people are different. Their troubles, responsibilities, and cares, and their soul's conflicts, exercises, and concerns, and yet with it all there is this exhortation: 'Be careful for nothing; let your moderation be known unto all men.' Now this

would take in everything to a real pilgrim; take in his soul, which is of first importance. It would take in his providences and circumstances, and it would take in the wilderness through which he must pass; and looking at those things and all the ramifications and intricacies of life's pathway, the Lord who sees the end from the beginning looks upon a poor troubled sinner and says, 'Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing,' for if you are careful for everything, you cannot alter it. Whatever there is wanting; you cannot number; whatever is crooked, you cannot make straight. Therefore be careful for nothing. It is a very painful teaching, but teaching to profit, when the Lord takes His people in hand and brings them to self-destitution and impotency, so that they need Him and all that He is. It would make that word good in 1 Corinthians 1 to one who has been brought to the end of his wisdom and strength: "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;," those main blessings of the Gospel which represent every spiritual blessing there is in Christ Jesus. But if you take notice of the characters to whom Christ is made those things, you will see that they come in suitable for the text: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, base things, and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are." Now each in our measure must be brought to that condition, and then, oh how acceptable and precious Christ will be to us. In our ignorance, for Him to be our wisdom; in our nakedness and undone condition, for Him to be our righteousness; in all our sense of filth and guilt, for Him to be made unto us sanctification; and in all our sense of sinnership, for Him to be made redemption, even to the forgiveness of sins. Therefore it takes in the soul, takes in sins – 'Be careful for nothing.'

Is there a way even with respect to sin, wherein His people should let their moderation be known, and their sobriety? I believe there is. My friends, if unbelief should set up our sins higher than the precious blood of Jesus Christ, it is not spiritual sobriety. The leper let his moderation be known, though he had that malignant disease. A beautiful word in Mark, something like this: "A leper came kneeling unto Him and worshipped Him, saying, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." That is a spiritual moderation with respect to guilt. Some of you might think: 'Well, my sin is so great that I think it is very imprudent for you to say that.' We should exercise a moderation, and to be careful for nothing, including our sinnership. But my friends, faith looks at Jesus Christ, and I myself should be in despair if I did not believe that the blood of Christ is infinitely greater than my sins, and that the infallibility of the blood of Christ is more potent than the indelibility of the stain of sin. So that upon each point there is the other side. 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything,' every point, pray. Paul here - and the Spirit will direct faith to the fulness of Christ. We can never walk in this word except faith has some apprehension of the all-sufficiency and suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ; that everything in Him to perfection is available to the uttermost of sinners that come unto God through Him.

Then with respect to our inward experience. When we are brought to walk in darkness and have no light, how can we be careful for nothing, and let our moderation be known? Of course you will find that the Word of God brings to light His dear people when, in the infirmities of their flesh, they are immoderate and careful about everything in a way of unbelief. I know it. Do you consider that Elijah was moderate and sober, and careful for nothing, when he fled three days into the wilderness and hid under a juniper tree, and desired the Lord to take his life, said he had had enough of it? He was

not any more than was Martha. But oh this is the word of life, and mercy, and wisdom to people who are distracted, who are confused, who are in the midst of things that they cannot manage, surrounded with impossibilities, and enemies lively and strong, people who are in the midst of the tempest fearing shipwreck, this is the voice that comes through all – ‘Be careful for nothing.’

So in all the internal conflicts and exercises of soul. Particularly too it embraces the pathway in providence. You may say that it is easier for you to stand in the pulpit and talk about it, than to walk it out. Well, I believe it is; but it depends how you talk about it. I believe in my measure I have had to walk this way, and I can tell you this from experience, it won't be a matter of choice in the first place. There will be nothing else for it. "They fell down, and there was none to help." There was only one thing they could do. They had to be careful for nothing, and could not help themselves. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." Faith will see a blessed, almighty, infinite, immutable, omnipotent God behind this exhortation, and will see enough in Him. And see what He declares of Himself in order that His people should be careful for nothing, but pray about everything. The whole of the 40th of Isaiah is concerned with the divine sovereignty, and omnipotence, and immutability of God for this purpose - "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God." So in Jeremiah, he stands forth, having placed him in a ridiculous position. I say it reverently, and you might say it is neither wise nor just. There was Jeremiah shut up in the court of the prison, and the Chaldeans were about to reduce the city to rubble, and yet the Lord had instructed Jeremiah to buy property in that city. His faith for a moment was very shaken. He said, "Lord, behold the mounts, the Chaldeans have brought up their artillery." 'Be careful for nothing;' not in the most extreme cases. The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Behold" - not that artillery, not the Chaldeans - "behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for Me?" 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication.'

This is the appointment of prayer, and you will notice two things, that all through the Word of God and your experience you will be brought into places where there is only one relief and one remedy, and that is to pray. Oh what a sweet outlet, what a sweet relief, to pray. Why, half the trouble is gone when you can pray about it, my friends. Some of you know that. But oh it is very trying when you cannot pray, when you are burdened, you are shut up, and your way hedged about with thorns, and things get worse rather than better, and when you cannot pray. It is one of the heaviest parts of experience; but this text will hold good there; 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication.' How can it hold good when you cannot pray? Well, what are you doing when you cannot pray, and you are in the midst of impossibilities and difficulties, hedged about and know not which way to take? Some of you are there, some have been, and some may be in the future. But you watch this. When you are in the greatest extremity, take notice of the direction of your soul. Perhaps it is difficult to get into a worse position than Jonah had brought himself into, in the belly of hell; and the text stood good there. "The pains of hell gat hold upon me", said the Psalmist. 'Be careful for nothing; the Lord is at hand.' Said Jonah: "I will look once more toward Thy holy temple." That is all he could do. Oh be thankful in your heaviest hours, and most bitter griefs, and your impossibilities, if your soul is Godward! You are safe, if you cannot say a word - you are safe if your faith is in the direction of God. It will be well.

'Be careful for nothing, but in everything' - and it means everything, I have taken notice sometimes of the 'alls' that are in the Word of God, and one good word which is related to the text it this: "We

know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God" - and it means All things. And it is just this in the text. Be careful for nothing, for all things must work together for good. You may not see it now; but it will, because God says it will. 'But in everything by prayer and supplication.' They are two different degrees of prayer, because you have different degrees of conflict and exercise. I feel that that is shown in the 42nd Psalm. Faith in David's soul asked a question: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" That was one thing; that needed prayer. But "why art thou disquieted within me?" That is worse; there is dismay there. You are cast down by the things you fear; but when those things are near and threatening you, you are in dismay. "Why art thou disquieted within me?" Therefore as things became worse rather than better, you will know what "'prayer and supplication' means. Oh when you feel that the Lord must do something for you; something must be done, or you are gone! But I have got one or two spots and places in my mind where these extremities have been a blessing. I don't think I could pass through them again, but I am thankful for the experience. Out of my little experience I can name this text. Not that I can easily walk through it. In one of my greatest troubles I can remember opening a cupboard door, and the prayer in my heart was, 'Lord, let it do me good;' and I felt the very trouble was working in me patience, experience, and hope.

'Everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving.' This is put in the middle of it. We have that glorious pattern in the Lord Jesus. I have thought of it, and perhaps have mentioned it. In the account of the Lord's Supper, we read this: "The night in which the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, and when He had broken, He gave thanks." He gave thanks when He was breaking that bread, the emblem of those sufferings that were imminent. The sufferings of Gethsemane and the cross, yet He gave thanks. If ever there was an example of thanksgiving in the midst of pain, suffering, and sorrow, it is in the Lord Jesus - "He gave thanks." And what did He give thanks for? For some of you! Oh to see and feel the love of a suffering Saviour, and now exalted high: Not a poor suffering Man now.

*With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below;
But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in glory now. (Gadsby's 117)*

And that is the mighty One to whom we are directed to pray, and to come boldly to the throne of grace, with thanksgiving. Thank Him first for what He is. With thanksgiving for what He has condescended to bring when He became incarnate, and what He has condescended to accomplish in His sacred Person, and what He has prepared for His people, what He is doing for them in heaven; for He has not vacated one office, He is still their great High Priest, and that was the ground upon which the Apostle would set the Hebrews to come boldly: "Seeing we have a great High Priest." Oh how wide your mouth will be opened in thanksgiving. And what will it do in all these things? It will eclipse the world, and you will be able to say, "Our light affliction which is but for a moment," comparatively. But that is not the greatest blessing in it for it is working for us, under the management and sanctifying influence of the grace of the Spirit, it is working for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 'Be careful for nothing' - nothing, whatever it is. If you see God, you will see enough, and will say with Jacob when he saw the wagons, 'It is enough; it is enough to take me there; it will be fulfilled.' And with the woman with her son lying dead; she said, "It is well." 'Be careful for nothing.' That would destroy the whole thing, if you could say, 'I can

manage that text very well, for it was not for that.' It would put you outside of every promise. "We know that all things" - not all but one. And there is another 'all things' very blessed, and it is all an incentive and foundation to walk in this Scripture: "All things are yours, because ye are Christ's, and because Christ is God's." Therefore be careful for nothing. David said when he saw Him, that great omnipotent One, creator of all, who is infinite in wisdom, omnipotent in power: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

The benefit is this – 'and the peace of God which passeth all understanding.' You won't understand it. When that peace comes, you will be amazed at it. You will understand experimentally the disciples in the ship, when the Lord commanded the wind and waves, and there was a great calm, they said: "What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey Him?" "A great calm", and there will be a great peace. "Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." And the peace is as great as God. Nothing can disturb it. It is absolutely independent of places and of circumstances. That peace would come and fill a poor sinner's heart if he was in a low dungeon, or in prison. You may depend upon it, that Bunyan knew something of this in prison.

'The peace of God.' The peace of what God is in Christ communicated to you in the midst of all your cares, manifesting that you are of more value than many sparrows, and that the hairs of your head are all numbered, and that all that the Lord Jesus has done was done for you, and

*All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please your heavenly Friend. (Gadsby's 64)*

It would produce the peace of God, and therefore immutable peace, omnipotent peace, eternal peace. When we try to speak of these things, I look at the Lord's people, and it all belongs to them. You look at the inheritance they have in Christ. An inheritance in glory; but they have an inheritance here. They inherit the Gospel and all the blessings and benefits of the New Testament peace. And this peace was procured by a victory: "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory." Or else there would be no peace. Oh here we have the Captain of salvation, He who led captivity captive, destroying the works of the devil.

But this peace too is to lie passive in His hands, believing that

*He was too wise to err, and O
Too good to be unkind. (Gadsby's 7)*

You will find peace there. Peace too in the will of God. Peace in being able to say,

Choose Thou the way, but still lead on. (Gadsby's 307)

But this will lead to an eternal peace, because we may take in this - death. Be careful for nothing, but with respect to death, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. Is there anything that we can thank the Lord for relative to death? There is. We buried one at Tunbridge Wells yesterday and felt there is everything to give thanks for to God in that particular death, though a comparatively

young man of forty-nine, he died in peace. Peace because the sting had been taken out of death, and the victory from the grave.

'And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds.' It means this - otherwise, except for this Lord which is at hand, and this mighty God, if it was not for that, the things you are passing through would just crush you and sink you in despair; but let your moderation be known. Isaiah looked at the people and saw they were grass, and he complained as it were: "All flesh is grass; what shall I cry? What can I say to withering blades of grass, dying men?" But the Lord told him exactly as we have it in the text: "Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" They will see enough there.

*Had I a glance of Thee, my God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon;
Vanish as though I saw them not,
As a dim candle dies at noon. (Gadsby's 480)*

Amen.