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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
Sunday morning 31st December 1967

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"Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth;  
and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall  
perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall  
wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change  
change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art  
the same and Thy years shall have no end."

Psalm 102 v.25-27.

This Psalm, although it is said to be a prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, yet is full of instruction and consolation, and especially at this time of the year, the close of another year. I set greater importance upon the close and the opening of years, far more than I do some of those peace days that are recognised through the year. There is something very impressive and very solemn about time. Even the ticking of the clock. To watch the hands of a clock move round its face, it is measuring off time like a yardstick and we are moving as quickly as time is carrying us, and if this truth, this fact is sanctified to us it will make us sober. There is a sadness about it but at the same time when you look at the changing scenes of this life in the perspective of this Psalm, there is something very blessed, very establishing, very comforting in the consideration that while everything here below is in a state of decay and of passing away, yet there is the infinite Eternal God Who declares of Himself "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed".

It is a wonderful description because it is an inspired description of our frailty in the first eleven verses of this Psalm - it could never have been so expressed even by the Psalmist, had it not been inspired, and how it does speak for some of us: "My days are consumed like smoke, my bones are burned as an hearth....My days are like a shadow that declineth, I am withered like grass". It is a right view of ourselves, of our frailty. This is the condition of man since the fall. "The moment when our lives begin, we then begin to die", we are mortal, mortal because we are sinners and there is nowhere abiding. But the Psalmist, he looks away from himself and from all that is in a state of decay and his faith looks at the Lord, and what a change! We see the change from the 11th verse to the 12th, we can almost see the Psalmist lift up His head according to that blessed Psalm: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

"My days are like a shadow that declineth, I am withered like grass, But Thou, O Lord". Have you ever felt that change? When you have contemplated your poor being, your frailty, your condition, and not only so, when that has brought us into such frailty and a state of decay: "But Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever.", and there is something else there to look at. Although he says in the 24th verse "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days", he was not in such a good place as Paul was when he wrote to the Philippians, Paul said: "I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire and to depart and be with Christ which is far better". David also said, "O spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more". But it is a blessed place, to be with the apostle. "I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." But on the other hand there may be warrantable and good reasons to desire the Lord that we may be spared. "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Some may feel a need to be spared because of their family. Some may have little children, heavy responsibilities and therefore, it would be warrantable, subject to the Lord's will to ask to be spared for their sakes and the apostle, he had reason why he would rather continue for he said, "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." It was more needful for the Church of God at that time for the apostle to continue with them

and he was confident, "Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you for your furtherance and joy of faith".

"Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth". The Psalmist here, he meditates upon the mighty works of God in creation, how substantial it is, "The heavens are the work of Thy hands", and in the 8th Psalm, he was so amazed by the majesty and glory of God as reflected in the heavens and in His works that he exclaimed, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?"; and if we are by the Spirit given a right meditation upon these things, it will bring us to the same point of amazement. It is the amazement of faith. A natural man who knows nothing at all of God is never brought to an amazement at all. I have felt that that exclamation of Solomon in the dedication of the temple is most blessed, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built". The amazement of faith.

"Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands". He brings that forward, and yet in a moment he declares, "They shall perish". Everything here is in a perishing state and all mankind also. There is nothing abiding, there is nothing that is real, everything has a false appearance and yet how deceptive it is. We were saying some time ago that a worldly man may go to a child of God and say to him, you look at my possessions, you come and look at my estates, look at my houses, you, he might say, simply live upon ideas, you see nothing, you can take hold of nothing. Well, if it were Buckingham Palace and you took some paraffin and put it on the floors of Buckingham Palace and with a little match set light to it and leave it for 24 hours, where would it be? Now that is the state of all things beneath the sun, and it can be distinctly sanctified to us if the Lord shows us the contrast between Himself, Who is eternal and His eternal things, the Gospel, salvation, His Kingdom, and this poor world which is fading away and the fashion of it is passing away. O you cannot set light to and destroy a living faith, nor the life of God in the soul nor the infinite and eternal God. I feel, at the close of a year to be enabled to look at things as Solomon saw them in the Book of Ecclesiastes, it would be good if our young people were to read it and if it were made a blessing to them. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" and yet says the Psalmist here, "Of old has Thou laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands", and therefore, we would not leave that remark without some explanation. The creation is not vain. There is no vexation of spirit in it, creation is the work of God. But all creation is marred, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain even until now". The creation came under the curse of God for man's sake, but the works of God praise Him, they are not vain. The beautiful fields and the food they produce for man and beast is not vain. The precious sun and its benefits, its warmth, its glory is not vain. But the vanity is in man alone, "Only man is vile".

"Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth, the heavens are the work of Thy hands..they shall perish". They shall perish, what a stroke in one sense after declaring the majesty and glory and sovereignty and omnipotence and wisdom of God in creation, he immediately says, "They shall perish", and that declaration belongs to everything beneath the sun. Then how foolish is man to heap up riches and have but a portion in this world! If we possessed the whole world it would only be a great mass of death and we should have to leave it. O I do feel that if the Lord should sanctify the fact, the truth here of our mortality, and the shortness and the vanity of all created things, it would be salutary and it would give us to see light in God's light, and it would help us, it would help us in this life, it would help us in our daily duties, or responsibilities, anxieties, in our afflictions and in our calamities. It is a passing show. "We spend our years as a tale that is told", and we are not the author of our own tale. No, God is the author of it. "The lot is cast into the lap and the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord".

"They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure". Here is the comfort, here is the anchorage, here is the Rock. This is expressed variously

in the Scriptures. Even when you take the Lamentations, full of sighing, full of mourning, full of sadness, yet it finishes up, Jeremiah finishes up with his anchor firm cast into the Rock of Ages. It is a beautiful conclusion to the Lamentations: "But Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever".

"They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure". Now as I have said concerning the universe and all that is in it that it is passing away and in a state of decay, so this declaration concerning the Lord it embraces the whole of the Gospel. The whole of salvation. The whole of the love of God, the whole of the covenant of grace, and all the purposes and decrees of God in the covenant, it embraces it all, "Thou shalt endure", and what a consolation this is! When you look on the one hand at all things that shall perish, everything; and then to be given that faith that can view those things that are eternal, why, it ~~was~~ the very source and foundation of comfort to the Corinthians, they put one against the other: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day, therefore, our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal". There is the one set against the other, and what a consolation, what a comfort, what a strength that is! We are in the midst of the wilderness, "The sands of time are sinking", and everything must sink with us concerning our own personal estate and condition when we die. Everything must sink with us, and then look immediately at this word: "Thou shalt endure", or as it is in the 12th verse, "But Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever and Thy remembrance unto all generations". So it transfers us, if one might so speak, from things that are perishing and dying and decaying, into the things of God which are eternal, imperishable, unlosable.

If it were not for this, my friends, what a hopeless thing life would be. If at death we were merely annihilated, what a poor short affair life would be. But when we see it as the Scriptures reveal it that all things here are falling to pieces as the Psalmist elsewhere says, "My bones are scattered at the graves mouth as one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth", he did not finish there, no, faith will never finish there. This is where the door of hope comes in, "But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord, leave not my soul destitute."

"They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure. Yea all of them shall ~~was~~ old like a garment, as a vesture shalt Thou change them and they shall be changed; But Thou art the same". No change. So it brings before us the infinite God and that infinite God in Christ. It brings before us the blessed and Holy Spirit Who reveals these unseen and eternal things, and that makes up salvation. Saved from things that are perishing unto those things that are eternal. Do you not feel the blessedness of it, the need of it? Poor trembling sinner, staggering to and fro like a drunken man and are at their wits end, to be given a sight of this glorious God, Who, though He has established the earth and it stands firm unto the time when it shall be dissolved, "The heavens shall be dissolved with a fervent heat, nevertheless, I according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. O this poor world is not all, and yet what a display there is of the majesty of the great God in conducting His people through the wilderness! and it is not as though they are immune from affliction and trial and calamities and disasters, you will find them all the way through the Scriptures. Some may think well, surely the Lord so loved His people and the work of salvation was such a great work and the Gift of His only begotten Son such an unspeakable Gift that surely He will take that people through the wilderness and they shall have no trouble no pain, no disasters, no calamities, but it is not so., and have not some of you found that it is just that way, that method that the Lord has led you by which you have learned more of Who and What He is, of His mercy, of His omnipotent power, of His divine faithfulness, of His immutability; and so it is when we have things sanctified to us. It is a mercy when we are deeply humbled

under the mighty hand of God. Well, there is teaching in it. You take for instance, poor old Sukey Harley when she saw her house afire. At the first instance she was so stunned, but in a little time she had a sense of the majesty and love and holiness of God and it put strength into her. O, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest and teacheest him out of Thy law".

"They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure." Everything of Christ will endure, His salvation will endure, His strength will endure, His throne endureth from generation to generation" and all His people endure because of Who He is, that will make Him precious to you. Nothing would endure if it were not for the infinite and eternal Being of Jehovah. Nothing would endure, but it all endures because of Who He is, and does not it make salvation great! and to think that this salvation can come down to poor insignificant, sinners. That they can be joined unto that mighty God in Christ. "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure". Thy grace shall endure, Thy love is an everlasting love Thy mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Well my friends, it does really transform you if for a little while it takes you out of yourself and away from the influence of this poor dying world, and gathers you into the Sanctuary so that you feel that this eternal, immovable kingdom is in your heart. You can afford to be among His poor people.

"Poor and afflicted, Lord, are Thine,  
Among the great unfit to shine,  
But though the world may think it strange  
They would not with the world exchange."

Why not? It shall perish. They believe it. His people may be looked upon as foolish but who is the greatest fool? man that is trusting in perishing things. For that man that is brought by grace to know, to believe in and trust in the infinite God, shall be saved. "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure".

"Yea all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt Thou change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art the same". There is no change in Him. He would cease to be God if He could change. The Lord Jesus Christ Who became man did not change when He took human nature into union with His divine Person. There was no change in Him at all. I think it is Dr. Owen that says that He became what He was not before, but He did not cease to be what He was. No change in Him, in His Person, in His infinite Being, in His divinity and therefore, nothing in salvation can change. His love can never change its course. It will never be diverted from its object. Thou shalt endure, Thou art the same; and really my friends, it is blessed and refreshing to be enabled to look at anything that does not change. O look at the changing world, its fashions, it is so changed now that you can hardly recognise the world from what it was fifty years ago. It is all changed and it becomes more and more artificial, more and more unreal. Money is unreal, the condition of things today are unreal, artificial. People seem artificial and unreal. O how people live is altogether different from what it was, things are upside down, the earth is upside down. "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure, Thou art the same". Nothing can change God and this is reflected too in creation, and it is a beautiful point as I have felt it. Men are changing; fashions are changing, everything is changing today with man, but creation does not change. It is the only thing you can look upon with any compacency and satisfaction, are the works of God, They do not change, the sun and moon and stars, the field, the trees, the cattle, they remain as they were created. There is a kind of solidity stamped upon it, the image of the Creator, and yet they shall perish. Creation will end. But look away from perishing things unto that which is eternal, o what a relief how refreshing it is sometimes. You might lie upon your bed and some have to lay there in pain, or sit and watch the afflicted and those they are tending upon and yet if the Lord enters into those afflictions and sanctifies them, they will give us to see that His compassions fail not, love is engraved upon all His dealings with His people, and that He is forming them and preparing them for an inheritance and that inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Yet it is through much tribulation they enter there. It is through changing things

they enter into a blessed eternity and what a great thing it is to live then by faith, to have set before us the glorious Jehovah, and the Object of faith, The Lord Jesus Christ.

"But Thou art the same and Thy years shall have no end". They had no beginning. The eternity of God's only begotten Son is a blessed truth. God has not any time at all, it does not belong to Him, indeed time was the first thing that was created. The beginning. "In the beginning". There was no beginning before and there shall be an end to that beginning when the Angels shall stand with one foot upon the sea and one foot upon the land and lift up His hand and declare time shall be no more. Does it not make this great God as He is revealed in His dear Son to be a Refuge? "My meditation of Him", said David, "shall be sweet.

"But Thou art the same, Thy years shall have no end". And this would matter nothing to us at all except that His people are united to Him in all His enduring. In all His eternal life, His eternal life is given them, and what is said of Him is true of those who belong to Him. Union to Christ, the most vital thing in religion, and if we have no union with Him then we have no interest in this eternity. "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure", and therefore, it belongs to His people. "They shall endure. "Thou art the same," and they shall be the same as He is. "We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is".

"But Thou art the same and Thy years shall have no end", then it says this: "The servants of Thy children shall continue and their seed shall be established before Thee", and that is promised because of this eternal Christ, the glorious Head of the Church, a seed shall serve Him. I think a little earlier this is spoken of "Thy... This shall be written for the generations to come and the people which shall be created shall praise Thee, the children of Thy servants shall continue". Now you will remember that the Lord Jesus in His intercessory prayer prayed this, "Neither pray I for these alone", that is, for these immediate disciples only, "But for them also that shall believe on Me through their word". It is a promise of the blessing upon the preaching of the Gospel. It will be perpetuated through all time and therefore, seeing Thou shalt endure, the children of Thy servants shall continue and their seed shall be established before Thee". So there is great encouragement, great encouragement even in view of that declaration. "They shall perish everything shall perish, but there is that that shall continue because of the eternity of the infinite God and all that He has done, His great salvation, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, it shall continue, there is nothing in it that can decay, nothing that can die, and His people are united unto Him and therefore, are partakers of the benefits of His eternity, of His immutability, of His sovereignty and so there is hope for the future, "The children of thy servants shall continue and their seed shall be established before Thee".

Amen.