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Sermon preached by Mr. F. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel, Brighton,
On Sunday Morning 8th September 1963

"My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." Psalm 104, v.34.

We read and have to prove that the preparation of the heart and answer of the tongue is of the Lord; and no other preparation is to any real purpose or spiritual benefit. We live to prove this in trying to preach, and we live to prove this in trying to hear. Therefore, there will be for the most part some reason why we are brought to consider any particular subject. The only reason that I can give for taking this text is very opposite to the text. For being exercised about my own case, a very heavy, a very serious case, I wondered whether I could continue at all. But that verse of a hymn saved me from sinking –

*Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower;*

- but that in itself would do no good, but

*Look to Jesus kind as strong,
Mercy joined with power. (Gadsby's 780)*

and under the influence of that the text came into my mind, I trust into my heart.

'My meditation of Him'- not of myself –'shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' The Psalmist in this way soliloquises really with his own soul. "Bless the Lord O my soul" -it is just himself and his soul meditating upon the power and the providence and glory of the eternal God; and it would be a great thing if by the Spirit we were enabled to do the same, to set before us His eternal Kingdom and all that that Kingdom contains, and to bring into our hearts the divine authority of that King.

But he commences his meditation with this: "O Lord, my God, Thou art very great, very great. Thine O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the majesty and the kingdom, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth are Thine; and of Thine own have we given Thee." We have nothing of our own; we are entirely dependent upon the Lord. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. A very great fact, if men realised it they would not strut about in their pride as they do; and it may be a very profitable consideration. The entire dependence of the whole human race is upon God for the body in creation and in His wonderful providence.

"O Lord, Thou art very great;" and you will be glad He is great. You will be glad that He declares of Himself, "Riches and honour are with Me, yea durable riches and righteousness." O there is something for faith to look at in the Gospel; and all that is revealed to faith in the Gospel, faith possesses and makes it the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and that is true.

Meditation is not the same thing as study. The Psalmist does not say - my study of Him shall be sweet. In human science and concerning natural things there is a need for study. Perhaps in a sense you cannot meditate without studying, but you can study and think without meditation - and the difference is vital and very blessed. It will discover whether we have a living faith or not, for you

cannot meditate on spiritual things without a spiritual mind and living faith; and as I feel it, one great token or evidence of a spiritual mind in meditation is the connexion between those things upon which we meditate and our experience, our desire, our knowledge of those things. There must be a definite connexion between the riches of grace in the Gospel and our experience by the Spirit of our deep need of those things, and some apprehension of their spiritual and eternal nature - and that is a very different thing from mere study. It is the work of the Spirit in the heart, a preparation for the Gospel. The Psalmist commences with an exclamation of faith concerning the greatness of the infinite Being of God. "And Thou art clothed with honour and majesty."

Although God in His infinite Being cannot be known, yet He has made Himself knowable in His incarnate Son, and in what a marvellous way! Had not the eternal Son of God been made flesh and dwelt among us, we should never know God, for He is only known through His incarnate Son. He brought the knowledge of God when He brought eternal blessings to this earth. He is called the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "O Lord, my God, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with honour and majesty." Then the Psalmist meditates upon His infinite power. In laying the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed for ever; and the different provisions in the earth, covered it with the deep as with a garment, the waters stood above the mountains.

Well my friends, the majesty and faithfulness of God are round about us. The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even. His eternal power and Godhead; and have you never felt as you have seen man who alone is vile, and all the confusion and sorrow and death that has filled this world; in the midst of it all sometimes, to see that in the works of God He is carrying on His own undisturbed affairs among the people and in the midst of all that appears to us so bewildering; and the clouds are the dust of His feet?

It is a comfort at times when walking about among the multitudes and when we see the condition of things in the world by the daily papers, to look out upon the works of God; no sin, no sin in the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air and all His beautiful providence in the harvest. "How manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all the earth is full of Thy riches." 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet;' and how the Lord in His providence supplies the needs of all the creatures. "What Thou givest them they gather; Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good." O my friends, there is at times a sweet rest in the Spirit, when you are able to cast your cares upon the Lord, in the midst of all those things which agitate the mind. In the multitude of our thoughts, which do drive us and cause us much trembling and weakness, yet "in the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight the soul." 'My meditation.' And the Holy Spirit does use these contrary things, these opposing influences, the distresses and oppressions felt by the soul, in order to exercise living faith.

O how great God is! Above and beyond all the influences of the devil, the world, and all that lies in wickedness in this world. "He sits upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." Then he speaks of the frailty of all creation and how dependent we are upon the Lord, even in our soul's experience. "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust; Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created for Thou renewest the face of the earth." Very blessed teaching in a meditation of this great God and the

effect of His sovereign disposition toward men and toward His people. His comings and goings, the hidings of His face and the causing of His face to shine; and therefore, David comes to this in his meditation – “The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works.” The works of men are nothing to Him, and they will be nothing to us really. All the works of men are dead and however high attainments may be made in discovery and inventions, wonderful as some of them are, yet my friends the whole is dead -and indeed many inventions would have been better had they never been discovered. "The Lord made man upright but he hath found out many inventions;" but O the contrasts between the works of man and the works of God. All His works praise Him; and all the works of men really condemn them. The more you scrutinise the works of God, the more you behold the perfection of the Creator; the more you scrutinise the works of men the more you see stamped upon them imperfection.

‘My meditation of Him shall be sweet.’ But we would leave those lesser things and as enabled come to the vital things of Christ. ‘My meditation of Him shall be sweet.’ Well, as we said at the outset we need a living faith to meditate; and meditation is not automatic. Study is. If you are studying a certain branch of science or languages, the time comes to take the lesson and you study, but meditation is not like that. It is spontaneous and therefore it brings us again to consider that real religion, the work of the Holy Spirit, is a soul experience. You can really feel and be conscious of a distinct creation independent of your natural self; an inner man - an inner man contained in yourself; and to my mind that is what the Apostle meant when he said, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who gave Himself for me;" and it has been a little encouragement to maintain the unequal strife within when Paul says, "The life that I now live in the flesh." He did not live in the flesh according to his inner man, but that inner man lives in his body of sin and death, and therefore, there is a conflict. Those who are brought safely to heaven will have no conflict there. "But what will ye see in the Shulamite as it were a company of two armies."

‘My meditation of Him shall be sweet.’ O this meditation is brought out and into exercise by circumstances; and the Holy Spirit uses all the changes through which we pass in order to the exercise of faith - and the exercise of faith is spiritual meditation. In every sense, as for instance in the 5th Psalm, it opens - "Consider my meditation." It will enter even into things of this life which are real, anxieties, trials, persecutions, temptations, losses, afflictions, hospitals, - the soul which has the life of God in it as it is brought into these circumstances, will produce a different need in different cases, which will need the Lord himself, the interposition of His grace - grace to be made sufficient; grace to give submission to His will and thus the very inward exercises of the soul produce meditation. It might even be in a way of fear. When you are brought into darkness and you have many fears about your soul, about your beginning, about your profession, about your end; and then when affliction also is upon your loins, that condition in a living soul will drive him to the throne of grace with his case, with his burden; Unto God will I commit my cause, who doest wondrous things without number" - and that is a meditation.

It is surprising how life in the soul will influence every condition and move the soul Godward. Therefore, really the whole of spiritual experience is meditation. But the centre of the meditation is Christ Himself. ‘My meditation of HIM - HIM.’ The centre and the life that is in Him is that life that is communicated to His people when they are quickened by the Spirit, and there is nothing that can influence the soul but the life of God; and that life of God can only be an influence to its own life.

Therefore, says the Apostle, "we are a saviour of life unto life and of death unto death." It is a mercy then if we have that life of God in the soul that is influenced by the life of Christ in heaven, by the communications of the Holy Spirit taking of His things and reveal them to our hearts. 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet;' and this can never be omitted, because if we omit His eternal Son, we omit everything. A meditation of the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is something different from a mere assent to that blessed doctrine. As we said at the outset, so you will find upon every point of meditation, there will be contact. There will be a direct and definite connexion.

Meditate then upon His Person, the eternal Son of God in our nature. I feel this not only as a heavenly doctrine, but I feel personally that it is the only foundation of my hope. It is a very serious thing to be in error concerning the Person of Christ. If He was the Son of God only in His incarnation, I should give up. He would be of no use to me, because He would have a beginning and that which has a beginning has an ending, and therefore, if our salvation depended upon one who had a beginning and had an ending, that salvation would not be eternal; and you will feel it. You will feel it with respect to your sins, to your lost and ruined condition. Of what use would a supposed saviour be that could begin and end?

All meditation of His eternity as the eternal God is precious; is sweet; it gives reality, it gives virtue, it gives eternity to the whole gospel. And what is amazing and will be sweet is for such a one, Heaven's Highest Glory, the Eternal Son of God, to take human nature. It is a mystery and I believe it, and I feel and so do some of you, that that contact which He made in taking human nature made it alone possible for His people to be brought into union, vital union with Himself. As in the Psalm, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted." His people by the Holy Ghost are planted in Him by regeneration; they are planted in Him in the likeness of His death and in the likeness of His resurrection - and this infinite condescension of the Lord Jesus has made this possible. "As we have borne the image of the earthy", the image of Adam, as we bear about us that image of deformity and of sin; and as we have that fallen nature and our eyes look at those things that are depraved, the world and all natural things; "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Only by the coming of the Son of God, bringing eternal righteousness with Him that His people might be made partakers of the divine nature and therefore, having a spiritual life, see with new eyes beyond those things that are natural to those things that are in the gospel, and feel the authority and power and wisdom of His grace. This is the effect and benefit of the incarnation of God's dear Son. 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet.'

Well, is it anything to us? It is a very pertinent question, and as you read down the chapters, even in this Psalm - how the Psalmist recognised the goodness and greatness and power and providence and eternal glory of God. You read down that chapter and see if that question comes into your conscience-- "Is it anything to you, all ye that pass by?" and we pass by every time we read the word of God, we pass by every time we come under the sound of the gospel. Is it anything to us? Does it mean anything to us, has it any relationship to our experience, do we need this great God, desire Him, do we know Him in this sense as to know that nobody else can save us or do us good? 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet.' Well then, there is a meditation of Him with respect to His righteousness. The gospel reveals the righteousness of Christ. Paul was glad of this when writing to the Romans; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ which is the power of God unto salvation wherein there is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith. O the very term righteousness

at times will make a poor ragged sinner glad. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and Joshua, in type, standing before the Lord in filthy garments, - "Give unto him a change of raiment." It is an amazing thing that all the riches of Christ in the gospel are made available for sinners and for nobody else; nobody else.

It was a help to me walking down the passage here this morning, feeling to be the chief of sinners, and it comes without thinking, it is a meditation that rises spontaneously in your heart,

*Of that mighty multitude,
Who of life were winners,
This we safely may conclude,
All were wretched sinners. (Gadsby's 717)*

and it helps wretched sinners to come and in their feeling of wretchedness and unworthiness, yet their case so desperate that they must either venture to the throne of grace as Esther ventured in unto the King - "If I perish, I perish." Meditation - it is a meditation.

Well, is the Lord Jesus thus in our life? His righteousness, righteousness to full perfection; the righteousness of a life of sacred sinless humanity, impeccable, incapable of sin, without wrinkle, without spot or any such thing. A life lived from beginning to end in perfection. That is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to a sinner that cannot look without sinning, cannot breathe without sinning.

'My meditation of His righteousness shall be sweet.' It is a wonderful thing that this provision is made. It was made in the covenant of grace; and this Man is called the righteousness of God, the Lord our righteousness - and the church is called the same thing. The Lord our righteousness, how close is the union, such a oneness between the church and Christ that all that He is and has is theirs. O what a great person is a child of God! Men to be wondered at. O I do love to meet one who has the life and grace of God in their soul - makes me wish I had it. You may sink very low, but O to come into contact with one of the excellent of the earth. Sometimes in deep affliction in our visitations, to see them weak and distressed in body and yet supported in their soul by grace.

The righteousness of Christ. Everything that is right imputed into a sinner in whom everything is wrong. 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet.' Meditation of His divine compassion. He can have compassion upon the ignorant and those that are out of the way. Such a High Priest he is, and a meditation of this, His compassion and divine mercy has the blessedness in it that it is just. The compassion and mercy of the Lord is just. There is nothing executed by the Lord Jesus which has any injustice in it. The forgiveness of sins is just. His mercy is not only joined with power but it is just mercy, and this will be a sweet meditation to a sinner. It is His righteousness that justifies and this is through the divine compassion of God who delights in mercy. Micah joins it together: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of His heritage; He keepeth not His anger for ever because He delighteth in mercy. " - and this could not be except that He has rendered infinite satisfaction to the Law of God and paid the uttermost farthing of the debt that His people owed.' Shocked at the sum, yet prompt to pay.'

O sinner, if we meditate upon this divine mercy and compassion of God in Christ, and that love which moved Him in all His temptations and sufferings, it would indeed dissolve our hearts in contrition and repentance at His footstool. 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet.' Then there is a meditation of Him as the Great High Priest. This seems to be according to Scripture the great office to which He was appointed in the covenant of grace, to be the High Priest; and the offering is Himself. He offered Himself, a spotless offering. Now is there any connexion between that glorious High Priest offering Himself without spot, for you? It has filled my heart with sweet surprise to meditate upon that High Priest and that offering and the altar. The altar was His human body; the offering was Himself, without spot. Now you connect that with those for whom He thus died and offered Himself a sacrifice.

*On such love, my soul still ponder,
Love, so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me? (Gadsby's 766)*

can you answer it? There is only one answer, and that is the sovereign will of God. That is the cause of salvation, the love of God, the everlasting love of God; such love uncaused. O, I believe there are some here that need Him and long for Him to reign over them and to choose their inheritance for them. Who would do His will if they knew it. "I will be glad in the Lord." Paul sums the whole thing up in that precious 3rd chapter to the Philippians; "Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Beautiful reckoning, as though he would say, 'Brethren, we have considered life's journey, enemies lively and strong, deep waters through which we have passed, fiery furnaces, sorrows, losses, crosses, calamities, but after all, reckon it up brethren, reckon up your worst things; and, then, my mediation of Him shall be sweet, that I finally will rejoice in the Lord, for my reckoning. is that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' And take it on the other side, 'Finally brethren reckon up all the advantages of this life, all that you possess, all that the world calls good and great - reckon it up; and then is your reckoning according to the hymn -

*Compared with Christ, in all beside
No comeliness I see;
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with Thee. (Gadsby's 940)*

What do you think about these things? Is there a response in your heart; can you endorse them? Well, 'my meditation of Him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.' Sometimes there will be a meditation of Him in heaven, and of the promises concerning His people. The conclusion of David's meditation was this- - "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes and whence came they? These are they that came out of great tribulation and washed their robes-and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

My mediation of Him through the wilderness journey, and His exalted and glorious Person in heaven as an Advocate and High Priest and Intercessor, shall be sweet.

O may we live to reach that blessed place and be prepared for it. Amen.