

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on
Lord's day morning, Jan. 1st, 1961.

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Text: Psalm cvi. 4-6.

We made a passing observation last Friday as to the importance of time as it is more distinctly marked off by the ending of a year, and now the commencement of another year. There is a very solemn, and in some respects a very sacred influence in considering the passage of time, its relentless passage, which is "bearing all its sons away", and will as considered in the light of truth, and of the Gospel, of that kingdom which is not of this world. There is something exceedingly sacred in the passage of time, which is moving the church of God to its eternal inheritance. But at the beginning of the year doubtless everyone has some view or anticipation of the future. A worldly man looks forward to more of the world, more of its pleasures. But even in the lawful responsibilities of life there is an anxious looking forward. Business men, the commercial world, the nation and its destiny in these perilous times. Therefore the people at the threshold of another year have their exercises. Whereas a worldling would seek to discover new ways and new paths to success, to amass a fortune, or to more pleasures, so one who has the true light shining in his heart would pray, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord! teach me Thy paths; lead me in the truth and teach me". Do you feel the difference? I don't mean, do you feel that your opinion is different from somebody else's, but do you feel the difference if there is something in your heart at the threshold of this year that has gone out to the Lord in exercise. The promises are good, and it is well to plead them. Whatever we plead, or for whatever we pray, we shall be insincere and hypocritical unless we feel a deep need of that for which we pray. In looking forward you may have before you a range of mountains, difficulties, impossibilities. You may fear the future. There may be influences in your present life difficult to bear from day to day, and therefore in all sincerity you may open this year at the throne of grace praying, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that these mountains might flow down at Thy presence!" And it would be a good beginning if looking at your own case and your own darkness, you should pray both for the church of God and for yourself, "Oh send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me!" And if you are true lovers of Zion and mourn over her desolations, you may begin the year and pray, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children".

And so thinking of the year and of my own lack and short-comings and needs, thinking of the church of God and this congregation in particular, I felt that if the Lord would answer the prayer of the text, it would take in everything. I believe that this prayer expresses the desire of many of you here, and if the Lord would answer it, what more could you need? "Remember me, O Lord! with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people."

And the great thing in the text is, "O Lord!" I have expressed admiration for the constant repetition of this exclamation of faith throughout the Psalms - "O Lord!" And it is worth while to mark it, those of you who are truly desirous to receive by the Spirit from the Word real vital communications. If you take notice of these exclamations, "O Lord!" you will find the context is very beautiful, because wherever it is so, the eye of faith is exclusively fixed upon Jehovah

in all His glorious infinite Being, in all those divine perfections as meeting in Christ, becoming a firm foundation and a blessed Object of faith and a Refuge for sinners.

"O Lord! remember me." I like to put the exclamation first - "O Lord!" For of what purpose would it be who else remembered us, if God did not? Do you feel that? Can you really dismiss all else and say, "If the Lord remembers me, it matters little who does not"? "O Lord!" Faith sees Him, adores Him, worships Him, hears His voice, sees Him in creation, in its beauties, its perfections, as we were singing concerning the sun (Hymn 777), perhaps the most glorious of God's creation. His works do praise Him, and wherever we see Him and He manifests Himself, it puts men in their right place, and ourselves as well. We see men to be as grasshoppers.

"O Lord! remember me with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people." I consider that if that is your prayer and your desire, the first thing that you desire is, that the Lord would by His Spirit's witness within give you to know that you are one of His people. Otherwise He will never remember you with the favours that He bears to them. And it is a mystery and a mercy that there is a people which belong to the Lord. "This people have I formed especially for Myself", says this glorious, infinite, incomprehensible God. He has desired it. He has in His sovereign will chosen a people - a remarkable thing.

"Remember me with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people." A people sanctified by God the Father, a people preserved in Christ Jesus, and in God's time called by sovereign grace. The Lord's people given unto Him by the Father, purchased by the Lord Jesus with His precious blood, and conquered by His invincible grace. "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" Do you feel any echo in your heart? Do you agree with it - "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee?" It is a challenge. The wealthiest people in the world that spread themselves like green bay trees, is there any that you would change places with?

"Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where's thy seat, oh tell me where?
Learning, pleasure, wealth, and fame,
All cry out, 'It is not here'."

Oh dear young people, may the Lord by His grace bring you to agree with Him in that! It is a mercy to be brought to agree with God and His Word.

"Remember me, O Lord! with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people." In this particular case it is not a particular blessing that the Psalmist is seeking, similar to that of Jabez. There are particular blessings to be sought, and are sought according as the things of your souls and circumstances. But Jabez prayed, "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!" And you see the same exercise of faith here. In the case of Jabez there was evidently a gracious unsatisfaction, I won't say dissatisfaction. If we are rightly exercised we shall never be dissatisfied with the blessings of this life. We shall say that we are unworthy of the least of them. But we shall be unsatisfied with them, because they leave an aching void, they can never fill. And being thus graciously unsatisfied, Jabez prayed, "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me with spiritual blessings, which can never be reversed, with which Thou dost not add sorrow, blessings

that are eternal!" And so here David prays, "Remember me with those favours that Thou bearest unto Thy people". No other kind of favours does he seek, because if the Lord remembers you with these favours, you will lack nothing. And therefore he is seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and that will be a good object before us, if the Spirit will keep us in that direction this year. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." I think it was Festus to whom Paul preached, and it caused him to tremble, and he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee". Very solemn!

"Remember me, O Lord! with the favour, ^{that} Thou bearest unto Thy people." And then it would seem that he would wrap this petition up in one parcel: "Oh visit me with Thy salvation!" The favour that he desired was all that pertains unto life and to godliness, all that constitutes salvation, the whole of it. But then if we pray this prayer in sincerity, we must be brought to need salvation. Oh how important this is! What a lot of talk there is about being saved and salvation in people who have never been shipwrecked and been taught to know how ruined they are in the Fall! I more and more feel the importance of this part of a good work of grace. It is a good work to be brought to ruin, it is indeed; for the Lord to kill a sinner, to kill his hope, his religion, and turn his beauty into corruption, and pronounce the sentence of death universally throughout his whole being. Only so shall we need saving.

"Oh visit me with Thy salvation!" And when we are brought there, nothing but a visitation will do. It is a wonderful revelation in the Word of God; but salvation in the Word of God is of no use to a shipwrecked sinner. It is a great thing that the Lord has been pleased to use the method of preaching the Gospel and connected preaching with salvation; but salvation in the pulpit is of no use to you. You need the blessed Spirit to bring it out of the Scriptures, to take it from the minister's mouth and visit your soul with it, with what it is. So that this intends this, and nothing less. It is a prayer that grace may save and sanctify, that the righteousness of Christ might justify, that the precious sin-atoning blood may purge the conscience and bring pardon and peace, that the power of God may be unto salvation in the Gospel, that grace might reign. "Oh visit me with Thy salvation!"

This is for the Holy Ghost to begin a work of salvation in the heart, even that very salvation that the Lord Jesus has finished, accomplished in His Person, and work, and life, and obedience, suffering death and resurrection; that is salvation. Bring it, visit me with it. Is this your prayer? Would anything less do? We were reading just now, "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water" (Psalm lxxv). "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." This is the visitation, bringing down salvation, that is all the power, the benefits, the virtue of Christ, God's eternal Son.

"Visit me with Thy salvation." And this is nothing other than the Gospel. Is there in your experience, in your heart, something which is a mystery to you, but which really is faith, which looks upward, which is properly independent of the earth? I say, properly in-

dependent, because in our bodies and in respect to this life, we are dependent upon what God has provided for us in creation and His wonderful providence. But is there that in you that needs and looks for something different from all beneath the sun, and you want something to come down from God? The Lord Jesus has ascended on high, and was received up into glory. Though He is immutable and impossible of change, yet He is now in heaven as He was not there before He descended; but He is not changed. He has come to this world, become Immanuel, God with us, and has wrought out in every thought, action, in spirit, in perfect obedience to the law of God, in His sufferings wherein He was made perfect, in His blessed death where by His blood He sealed the covenant of grace and sealed His dear people unto heaven. After His resurrection, His glorious resurrection, He ascended, and still retains that human heart, still occupies those offices of High Priest, and Advocate, Substitute, Mediator, still now He is in heaven. He still retains those merciful characters, He is still the great Shepherd of the sheep whom God has brought from the dead. He is still the Refuge of sinners. And this is salvation in heaven. "His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." And now the Holy Ghost wonderfully, graciously, mysteriously communicates that which is in the fulness of Christ, the merits of His Person as Immanuel, the benefits of His mediation and intercession, and the righteousness which alone can justify the ungodly, communicates His grace, that divine favour, communicates mercy which endures for ever, which is joined with power, communicates everlasting love, and so visits poor sinners with this great salvation. Is there anything amazing to you in it? Oh think of it! Dismiss everyone from this chapel except yourselves. If the blessed Spirit was so to visit you with that salvation and the fulness of the Gospel in all its living virtue, in all its saving benefits, and fill your heart with the love of Christ, illuminate your understanding with His heavenly inshining, what a condition you would be in! I know a consideration of it makes you feel very low, but when you thus feel low, faith will rise high. Oh there is ^{nothing} thing like it! It touches a spring in the soul, and brings into activity all the graces of the Spirit, and enables us to humbly use the first three verses of the Psalm, "Praise ye the Lord". There may be many things that are difficult for you to express when you feel your conflicts and trials, but I believe that everyone will be able to say that the Lord is good, whatever I am, whatever my pathway is, the Lord is good. Good not only because of what He bestows, not only because of what He has done, but because of what He is.

"Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all His praise?" Nobody, blessed be His name. A good thing it is. None can show forth all His praise, or utter the mighty acts of the Lord. He would be of no use to me if I could. He is infinitely beyond all that, and yet He is worshipped; can do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Therefore the Psalmist simply comes to this as he is before this infinite God; "Thou, great God, hast divine favours toward Thy people; remember me with these favours, oh visit me with Thy salvation!"

In this perilous and difficult time - it is a difficult day, difficult with young families in the midst of the snares which abound; but my friends, it is a mercy if we are brought in the midst of all, to realize that one thing is needful. Oh how kindly did the Lord

correct Martha! "Thou art careful and troubled about many things." You might say to me, "So would you be if you were in my circumstances". I am; but says the Lord, "One thing is needful, Martha". Do you need wisdom? He can give it. Do you need strength? He is the Helper of the helpless. Everything that you can possibly need in every occasion and all circumstances is to be found in the Lord Jesus, that Friend of whom we have been singing (Hymn 132). And it is very sweet to come up from time to time by occasions from the wilderness, leaning upon the Beloved; and I believe that the only rest and comfort we shall find in all our tribulations, and cares, and anxieties, as we feel driven here and there, is to

"Look to Jesus, kind as strong,

Mercy joined with power".

"Oh visit me with Thy salvation!" There would be this in the prayer too. It would be to pray for a new creation, to be born again. Strictly speaking, nobody has ever prayed to be born again. If ever you have prayed to be born again in spirit and truth, it is because you are. No dead person prays for life. Have you ever prayed to be born again? Have you ever longed to be a living soul? Have you ever longed for heavenly wisdom which is from above, which is entirely different in its nature from heavenly-wisdom human wisdom and human intelligence? They are good in their place as used lawfully, but human wisdom and science cannot possibly penetrate that which is spiritual. The greatest scientist in the world could not sit down and produce in his heart what is in this prayer; it is different, higher. Do you feel it? Do you say nothing else will do? And are you willing, if it was required, to forego all else, if the Lord would grant you this favour, this portion? Remember me, O Lord! with the portion that Thou givest unto Thy people, and that portion is eternal salvation.

"That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may see it." "He shall take of Mine", it is said of the Spirit, "and show it unto you". The Holy Spirit never shows a sinner the things of Christ in the Gospel without bestowing what He shows. And you will just know whether the Lord has had anything to do with you in your religion, or whether He has not. We might take that point for a moment - "that I may see the good of Thy chosen". You may have seen it as you have heard the preaching of the Gospel. You see there is a blessed people. You see that divine and eternal good that is bestowed upon them. But you want to see it for yourself, and if the Holy Ghost shows you anything, He will give you what He shows. And you will know whether you have heard the voice of the Lord, because He never speaks to anybody unless He gives that person the things He spoke. I cannot give you the truth, but if the Lord should condescend to speak through me, then the word would be glorified in your experience. Is not that what you want? "That I may see the good of Thy chosen."

We were reading just now what that good is: "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth". He must be. Who else can be blessed? The alternative is to be a reprobate, to be refused, to be passed by. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee." Oh this blessed causing brings to bear, by His Spirit using circumstances or the preaching of the Gospel, brings you into a dire condition, some extremity, some hopelessness, and causes you to approach unto Him, saying, "Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee; remember me, Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto

Thy people. Oh visit me with Thy salvation, in order that I may see". To be visited with salvation will issue in this, because you look at this portion. You look inside salvation, and all its heavenly ingredients would be brought into your heart and work there as the kingdom of God, as leaven in three measures of meal, and then you would see the "good of Thy chosen". The good of God's chosen in the richest expression of it is in the 1st Ephesians. You look at the two things, and then at your heart, and then look up unto the Lord in this prayer.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Upon what ground? "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." That is the good of His chosen, "that I might see it". "That I might rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation." Here the people of God are compared to a nation. Peter compares them to that: "Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a holy nation, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light". And so when we read here of a nation, it brings us more particularly, as I judge, to His kingdom. The kingdom of Christ is the church. To rejoice in the gladness of His nation is to rejoice in the King: "Rejoice, the Lord is King". To rejoice notwithstanding that the mighty men of this earth, that their breath is in their nostrils, and the Lord stands forth and declares, "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". You will rejoice in that, that He is immutable, that He is omnipotent, and there can be none to compare with Him. "Who will ye compare with God; what likeness will ye make unto Him?" And you will rejoice with His nation. It would be a good year if the Lord would fulfil this prayer throughout the year, my friends.

But I see the time is gone. "That I may glory with Thine inheritance." Well, the church of God is the inheritance of the Lord Jesus, and blessedly the Lord Jesus is the inheritance of the saints. In the Ephesians we read, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance", and in the same chapter we read it the other way round. The saints have obtained an inheritance in Christ, and then says the Apostle, "That the eyes of your understanding might be enlightened, that they might know the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints". We cannot speak of it now; but my friends, if Christ is your inheritance, you are His. Oh the blessedness of union with the church's living Head!
