

**Sermon by Mr F. L. Gosden preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
Lord's Day evening 1st September 1963**

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Psalm 133.

This precious Psalm may try some of us. Some of you who have for years been attending upon the means of grace are brought to this one point: you long, by the Lord, the Spirit, to be put among His children, made one of them. 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,' and therefore the all-important point is the relationship: to be brethren and the children of one faith. Therefore, in a spiritual sense, the only thing that will make you one of the brethren is to be born of God. This is just what some of you want, and desire it by the Spirit in your own hearts.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3 v. 1). Oh, that question that is asked in Jerusalem may be a very serious question in your heart: "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?" (Jer. 3 v. 19) How can it be done? And you look at yourself, I look at myself, what you are, what your life has been, and you are compelled to reply to that question 'O Lord, Thou knowest; I don't see how I can be put among the children.'

The Lord answers His own questions, as in that like difficult question concerning the dry bones, "Can these bones live?" Dry, scattered bones – is it possible? The prophet in humility refers the question back and says, "O Lord God, Thou knowest" (Ezek. 37 v. 3). Well, it is a gracious attitude of faith to refer back questions that you cannot answer to Him that makes those questions. He will answer them.

'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' Paul, writing to the Ephesians, tells us exactly how this is done: "and you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." But he goes on to say, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2 v. 1, 4-6). "You who were dead in trespasses and sins," raised up together, and made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

But how is that connected with the text? How does this make them brethren? He tells us at the conclusion of the chapter: "Now therefore," because you are quickened and because you are united unto Christ, and because you are raised up together "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2 v. 6, 19).

"Behold." Look at it; look at a congregation; behold them gathered, gathered by the Holy Spirit, gathered by that inward secret work of the Spirit in the heart, convinced of sin, turned to destruction, having the sentence of death given, to feel their need of salvation, to see their danger, to seek for a refuge, and by the leading of the Spirit to be brought under the rod and into the bond of the everlasting covenant. Oh, it is a great thing to behold a company of people who are brought to the Sanctuary, by the inward leading, teaching, of the Holy Ghost in the soul!

'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' It is very evident that the method of God in the Church is to gather people together. "Gather my saints together unto Me" (Ps. 50 v. 5), and really that commandment was first given to His Servant the Lord Jesus Christ: "Behold My Servant" (Is. 42 v. 1); and He came really to redeem His people and to gather them "out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south" (Ps 107 v. 3), and to gather them in the assembly of the saints, in the unity of the Spirit, in the unity of the faith.

My friends, there is nothing like it. I have at times felt it most sacred to look upon a congregation of people who, under the teaching of God, have been brought to sit before the Lord, who are brought, even in these perilous times, to seek "a city which hath foundations" (Heb. 11 v. 10), realising that there is no foundation in anything in this world, and certainly no foundation in ourselves; and the Holy Spirit teaches them the same thing, the same truth. He convinces them alike of their sins; He leads them to seek the Lord Jesus, leads them into the Gospel, and, in His providence, He leads them here and there, establishing Churches. Beautiful it is, and that alone is the Church of God where He dwells – a people gathered by the internal, secret work of the Holy Ghost. My friends, if there were any that came to this country from abroad that were taught by the same Spirit, they would be led about in this country until they were brought under the sound of a ministry that would meet their case.

'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' This unity is the unity of the Holy Ghost. We cannot create it, and therefore we read in the Ephesians, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" and love (Eph. 4 v. 3). You can endeavour to keep it, and should, but you can never *create* this spiritual unity, and the secret of it is, as we have said, the new birth – to be created new creatures in Christ Jesus. That new creature, having a spiritual nature, needing the same spiritual food, having set before them the one blessed object, 'how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' And the place that they dwell together is Zion. Therefore the text is connected with our morning subject: "Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort" (Ps. 71 v. 3).

In the 132nd Psalm we read "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (v. 12-4); and the teaching of the Spirit will bring a unity with Christ. "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2 v. 16), and faith will rest where Christ rests. He rests in His love; He rests in Zion; and this rest is beautiful, glorious. It means this, that all the purposes of God in salvation, and all the spiritual blessings, and all that constitutes salvation, and the whole of the everlasting Gospel in its streams, terminate in Zion. It rests there, and this is true of every one of His people. You think of it, my friends. Oh, it seems at times too great, that every individual who constitutes this family – the brethren – is a terminus for all the purposes of God in salvation! When it reaches a sinner's heart it rests; there is nowhere else for it to go. You think of it: "This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

Oh, 'how good and how pleasant it is' to behold a gathering together of people dwelling in the unity of the Spirit and in the unity of the faith, having before them the same object, seeking the same city, being led by the same glorious Leader the right way to the city of habitation! It is good and it is pleasant. It is 'like the precious ointment upon the head.'

Now in these two verses the Psalmist shows us the secret of this unity, and from whence it proceeds. 'It is like the precious ointment upon the head,' that is, upon Christ the Head of the Church. As a Mediator He had the anointing work of the Spirit immeasurably upon Him. Oh, the relationship of the humanity of the Son of God! And what a glory and a

beauty there is as He declares Himself to be the Son of man! The Son of God He is, but for the encouragement of His dear people He delights to call Himself the Son of man – and how it is emphasised: “This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchanging priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Heb. 7 v. 24). “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Lk 15 v. 2); and He is revealed – revealed to poor sinners who are brought to self-destruction, who are brought to put their “mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope” (Lam. 3 v. 29); and oh, how attractive he is! It was asked of Rebekah, by Abraham’s servant, “Wilt thou go with this man? And she said I will go” (Gen. 24 v. 58). The angel of the Lord went with that exercised servant. Oh, how he trusted, how he prayed, and when he saw indications of the Lord’s favour he bowed his head and worshipped.

Well, this Man is set before us from time to time, this glorious Head from whom all blessings flow. Some of you have been brought to need Him and to desire Him; and if the blessed Spirit should put the question to you, “Wilt thou go with this Man?”... Why, Isaac had been described to Rebecca; it had been told her that Abraham had given everything to his son, a description of his beauty, of his glory. Oh for the Holy Spirit so to reveal a precious Christ in your heart, for you to see in Him an all-sufficiency in His fulness, to see Him to be greater than yourself, a Rock that is higher than you, a Refuge, a Hiding-place, and a strong habitation, (Ps. 61 v. 2; Ps. 142 v. 5; Ps. 92 v. 7) to see His infinite wisdom sufficient to direct you, make you “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3 v. 15), to see His grace sufficient to save you. It is like the precious ointment upon the glorious Head. He is a Mediator and therefore He came into the very place of His people; He is the Head of the Church, and therefore He is the Head of the ministry. He says concerning Himself and His ministry “The Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives ... and to comfort all that mourn” (Is. 61 v. 1-2), and that same anointing flows down upon every God-sent minister. It makes one exceedingly tremble at times. But, my friends, have you not found this anointing oil, as you have been gathered together in the sanctuary, sensibly affecting your heart, your will, your affections, and drawing your soul up unto God Himself? Oh,

*“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend.”*

(J Allen; Gadsby’s 158)

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church; He is the Object of faith, the *one* Object of faith; He is the centre of the soul; and to see a people who are gathered together, who are brought to know Him, to love Him and His truth, ‘it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, and went down to the skirts of his garments.’

It is one Spirit. You need the same anointing to hear as you need to speak; and there is a blessed unity in that anointing which “teacheth you of all things ... and is no lie” (1 John 2 v. 27), that anointing that abideth for ever. If ever you have had it, my friends, you will never lose it. You may lose the influence of it for a time, but that unity will establish a standard in your experience spiritually in every respect. That anointing will establish a standard in your hearing. Like a good musician, who would detect any discord, so will that anointing give you such a hearing that you will know directly whether there is any discord preached. It would establish in you a taste, “if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2 v. 3). Why, my friends, faith can taste Him; have not some of you tasted the Lord, tasted the sweet honey of the Gospel, felt the power of His grace? So this anointing is like the ‘precious ointment upon the head that ran down.’ You will find everything in this Psalm comes down

– it descends. There is not a word in this Psalm concerning anything coming *up*, if you notice it. The ointment ran *down* upon Aaron’s beard – ‘as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.’ Everything in Zion comes down from heaven. It is a heavenly Jerusalem, heavenly doctrines, people that are born from above, people who are being led back to heaven – and have you not felt this? It is almost impossible to describe an atmosphere, but in my little way I have known and felt what it is for the very atmosphere of the house of God to be charged with the vital influence of His life.

‘That went down to the skirts of his garments.’ That to my mind tells us that this anointing reaches to the very least and last of His people.

“And to Him the weakest is dear as the strong,” (J Hart; Gadsby’s Sel. 804)

and some of those that are hidden and unknown are often discovered to have closer contact and dealings with God than others who are more in evidence. Yes, but in any case I feel persuaded of this, that the most obscure of the Lord’s people, and those that may be illiterate and ignorant of the things and learning of this world, are not a whit behind the chiefest apostle. They would be amazed if you should tell them so. Sukey Harley - if you were to go to her in the corner of her cottage and say ‘You are not a whit behind the chiefest apostle, would open her eyes; she would say ‘I am the chief of sinners.’ And so with respect to some of you, those of you perhaps who can sigh but dare not talk. If it was said to you, ‘Will any other blood but that precious blood of which Paul speaks – “How much more shall the blood of Christ ...” (Heb. 10 v. 14) – will any other blood be sufficient for you? ‘Oh,’ you would say, ‘I must have Paul’s God! I need the same Redeemer, the same atonement, the same “fountain opened ... for sin and uncleanness” (Zech. 13 v. 1); I need the same righteousness.’ So that you would not be a whit behind the chiefest apostle. Also here, in the unity of the Spirit, you must have the same Saviour, the same salvation.

It is amazing when you come to contrast it with the world that lies in wickedness. Oh, it will make you thankful for any hope that the Lord has made you to differ: differ from what you once were and differ from the world that “lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5 v. 19). “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us” (Ps. 115 v. 1) – and so in this teaching and in these confessions there is the unity of the Spirit.

‘Even Aaron’s beard; and went down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion.’ This is just another description of the influence of the Holy Ghost in an assembly. This dew and anointing is really the same thing. This dew is the unction of the Holy One (1 John 2 v. 20), and the nature of dew is that it descends; imperceptibly it arrives; you cannot see dew. You get up in the morning and find the blades of grass sparkle with drops of dew – and how refreshing it is! Have not some of you felt the influence of the Holy Spirit as dew resting upon your branch? How penetrating it is! How it softens a hard heart! How it removes all rebellion! How it produces the sweetness of repentance! Dew: it creates an atmosphere in the soul which meekens the spirit. I believe when dew rests upon the soul it will accomplish these blessed verses in the 5th of Matthew, the Beatitudes. You will know then what it is to be spiritually poor in spirit. That dew will make you a mourner, a blessed mourner, will give you meekness and humility, will give you to hunger and thirst after God, to

*“... know and love Him more,
And all His wondrous grace explore.”* (R Burnham; Gadsby’s 771)

That sweet dew will enable you to bear – to bear persecutions, to bear the cross, to suffer all things for His name. A heavenly dew: it enables a poor sinner to go softly, and it gives wisdom, wisdom to handle matters wisely.

‘As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.’ The mountains of Zion – the Church of God is built upon Mount Zion. Immovable it is: “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved” (Ps. 46 v. 5). “The gates of hell shall not prevail” against the Church (Mat. 16 v. 18), and therefore shall not prevail against one of His people. Oh to be “a living stone” (1 Pet. 2 v. 4), built upon the living foundation! ‘As the dew that descends upon the mountains of Zion.’

The thing is, my friends, are we a part of this building? Do you disallow Him? Have you this evidence of being one of the brethren: “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1 v. 12)? So there we are taught that receiving Him, and believing in Him, and coming to Him are all the same thing. Oh, be thankful if in secret you can say ‘I do receive Him; I receive the truth; I receive the Gospel; I do come to Him to ask Him to bless me and to remember me with the same favour as to His people (Ps. 105 v. 4).’

‘For there the Lord commanded the blessing.’ It is a great thing to bestow a blessing, but oh, when the Lord commands it! He commands blessings for those who, with Jabez, cannot be satisfied with anything less than a blessing indeed (1 Chr. 4 v. 10).

Thankful you will be for the blessings of this life, for all the benefits of His kind providence, for all the wonders of His creation, but they cannot satisfy the soul. They reach the body, but you need that that will reach the soul; and He commands it. Oh, how great! There are those who may be seeking Him and yet cannot find Him, those who cry and shout and He seems to shut out their prayer, and yet they resort to this strong habitation where there is a strong, almighty, omnipotent, immutable God, and come and sit in Zion and feel the influence of His divine things, and yet they will want a complete deliverance and to be brought into liberty.

Oh what a day that is when God commands the blessing in some poor sinner’s heart, as He did with respect to the eunuch, when He said to Philip “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” There is one there that is seeking Me, reading My Word, longing to know the truth. “Go and join thyself to this chariot.” And He commanded a blessing, such a blessing that the eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?” And how blessed it is ‘for brethren to dwell together’ in the unity of the ordinances of the Lord’s house. That has increased its attraction to me, that word of the eunuch: “What doth hinder me to be baptised?” (Acts 6 v. 29, 36) Oh the love that filled his heart! Alas that it is with some that there is everything they can see hinders them, every reason why they should not honour the Lord in walking in His ordinances. But when the Lord commanded the blessing through Philip, then he said, ‘Why, there are no hindrances. “What doth hinder me?” My sins cannot hinder me; He has borne them in His own body Himself, on the tree.’ ‘For there the Lord commanded the blessing’ – and He raises it up, ‘even life for evermore.’ So that, as we said this morning, this strong habitation, and everything in the Church, is invincible, eternal, imperishable; so it is the gate of heaven itself, ‘even life for evermore.’

And, just in conclusion, the thought comes: that word of Paul in the Ephesians concerning the family of God – “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3 v. 14). Not of the two families, one in heaven and one on the earth, but one family, the unity of the Spirit, the

unity of the saints, the end of faith, heaven itself. "Of whom the *whole* family in heaven and earth is named."

Oh may the Lord put those who are anxious among the children! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs" (Rom. 8 v. 17) with the Church of Christ.