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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel, Brighton
Sunday evening, 18th September 1966

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and
the place where Thine honour dwelleth. Gather not
my soul with sinners.....".

Psalm 26 v 8-9.

"This Scripture has been upon my mind since the death of our late dear friend Miss Goodwin, for I do feel that this expresses the whole tenor of her religious life. She gave evidence of it. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". That was the confession of David's faith and on the ground of that confession there was this earnest prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners". Love to the house of God was outstanding in the history, in the experience of David, and it will be so in the case of all those who love the Lord, His truth, His people and His ways.

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house". The first word is the greatest, . The greatest really in the whole of the Bible. Lord, Jehovah, Father Son and Holy Ghost, and we cannot name that name aright without we know something of Him. There are those that shall say, Lord, Lord, to whom He will say, I never knew you. We need to be very careful and tender in naming the name of the Lord. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His". But this is the evidence of it, "Let Him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity". It is good when you feel a check, a caution upon your spirit as you approach to the Throne of Grace, and so David here has before him Jehovah. Indeed, it seemed as though he was ever before the Lord, and it was his comfort. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want". Well, what is this Lord in your experience? when you come to the house of God, for this Lord is this House? He is the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. Everything is in Him. The fulness of the Godhead is in Him. The Son of God incarnate is a wonderful mystery, that all the divine perfections of Jehovah are in the name Jesus Christ; and not only is there the fulness of the Godhead bodily in Him, but it pleased the Father that in Him another fulness should dwell, not the same although it is most blessedly effected by the fulness of the Godhead, but it pleased the Father that the fulness of everything that the Church should need should be in Him. The fulness of life, of light, of grace, the fulness of holiness, of power, of righteousness, of infinite merit, the fulness of unsearchable riches, is in Him to be communicated to His people. This, in the first instance, is this house. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house".

We have a similar word in the 69th Psalm. "The zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up", that was spoken in the spirit of prophesy concerning the Lord Jesus, but it is also an experience of His people. "The zeal of thine house". Yet faith sees in Christ, in that true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and under a sense of a need of all that is in Him, and a realisation that out of Him there is nothing but death and destruction at the best, so that by the same Spirit there is a zeal, "And the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force". Now this is in this love. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thine house, the place where Thine honour dwelleth". That is the place where this honour dwells as it could dwell nowhere else, in the Person of His dear Son. O how God's honour dwells in Him! In all that He became, He vindicated the honour and glory and justice and holiness of Jehovah in human nature. That is the place where God's honour dwells, in Christ. He honoured the law and that is a great point in this house. He honoured the law by fulfilling it. He magnified it and made it honourable, He went to

the very end of it and exhausted it in fulfilling it. The righteousness, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus which justifies a sinner is in a magnified, fulfilled and honoured law.

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house". When by faith you see not only the glory of His Person, but to see what there is in Him, in His fulness, a fulness that lacks nothing at all. A completeness, and in that completeness His people are complete in Him. And the acceptability of this dear Son to God to His Father, acceptable to the Holy Law of God, and His people are accepted in the Beloved. Lord, I have loved it. "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth."

But in the second place this house is the church of God. The visible church is a divine institution. It is not the whole visible church that will be in heaven. The invisible church is contained in the visible. We may be members of a visible church and yet not be a member of Christ's mystical Body. But still, the institution of the visible church, the ordinances of His house, the provision that He has promised to place are in Zion. "Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house". And you will find a connexion between your love of the Lord Jesus and His preciousness to you under a sense of your need of Him and His sufficiency, and the place of the Sanctuary.

"I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all."

I seem to have to think what I say, indeed I say nothing nowadays without thinking, it is so easy to talk glibly about being vile, but you may depend upon it, that if Christ is made precious to you in His sin-atoning blood, you will know something of that teaching that Job had. It was no lip confession when Job said, "Behold I am vile".

"Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". We had a beautiful description of the Church in both those Psalms (Psalm 48 and 132). "God is known in her palaces for a Refuge...We have thought of Thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple". Have you ever found that experience? Have you ever known God in His palaces for a Refuge? Has there been manifested to you by the Spirit such a sense of security in Christ as He may have sent help to you from heaven and strengthened you out of the means of grace from His word and under the preaching of the Gospel, that you have really known the Lord in Zion's palaces for a Refuge?

"I have loved the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honour dwelleth", and if we love it because God's honour dwells there, we shall be jealous for His honour and glory in our assemblies, in the ordinances of His house. There will be such a sacredness to us in the things of God. They are so different in their nature from everything else, it is a kingdom which is not of this world at all. "Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". That is the reason why he loved the Sanctuary, because God's honour dwells there. How sad it is to see some places degenerate into superficial, light religion and innovations that are nothing to do with the provision God has made in His house. And that place where His honour dwells there will be a people gathered together in whose heart is the work of the Holy Spirit where there will have been deep and penetrating conviction of sin, a sense of a need of salvation. In my little observations I feel persuaded that there is so much light religion about because of the lack of penetrating conviction of sin. Where that is there will be one thing needful, and that one thing is salvation, and God has promised to bless what He has provided in Christ Jesus, and you will feel a connexion between the inward exercise and experience of your soul and that provision that God has made in Christ, and that provision which is manifested in the ordinances of His house and the means of grace. You will breathe it,

you will breathe the atmosphere.

"Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth", and you will feel to rest there. Rest in the Lord there. I believe I have known by occasions a little of what it is to rest in the Lord in the Sanctuary of God. When the Holy Spirit has taken of salvation, of the things of Christ, of His righteousness, of His saving, sanctifying, all-sufficient grace, and so influenced every faculty of the being as that I have felt all taken up in Him, live His life, see light in His light and breathe the atmosphere of heaven. Have you ever known that? Then you are transformed by the renewing of your mind and in that light you will behold the glory of the Lord and are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. You might say well, you are describing very high things, but there is nothing low in Zion. Can you tell me anything that is low in real Godliness? You look at what you might think is the lowest, the lowest thing in the kingdom of God is infinitely greater, higher, than the highest things of nature. Why my friends if I could attain unto a real spiritual groan with the Holy Ghost in it, I should be thankful, it would be a great height. And the Lord is pleased to dwell in Zion as He dwells nowhere else, and nothing can alter it. These Psalms, the Word of God, they never need to be revised. Modern scholars think they should be but they are fools.

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation". What a declaration! This almighty Jehovah has chosen one place in this world for His habitation, and that is Zion, the house of God. But then there are so many sects, so many opinions, that anybody might claim that word, that Scripture. How are we going to determine what gathering, what assembly really consists in Zion, the habitation which the Lord has chosen and desired for Himself? What would be right? Well, I believe this, apart from any name at all, where there is a people assembled that are gathered together by the Holy Ghost's inward teaching, a people who are brought to know their own destitution, and that this world is a complete wilderness, a people that are taught that there is no foundation and no abiding city here, and therefore a people who are made real sinners and need a Saviour, are led about until they are brought under a ministry of the same Spirit's teaching, and wherever that assembly is, by whatever name it is called, there is Zion, the Lord is there.

"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". O think of it! Now where there is the Spirit's indwelling and teaching, this desire of the Lord will be the same where there is grace in the heart, and some of you may be able to say in truth; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple". It makes your life. We would be diligent in business, we should indeed, but this will come first. It makes up your life, in the new man of grace, his affections are there and in your measure you can say exactly what the Lord says, have you ever really felt it? "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it"? "This God is our God, He will be our guide, even unto death". And not only so, but the Lord looks upon His people, and what is said concerning Zion belongs to every one of them. Not some, not some that we may think are more richly endowed and highly blessed, not so. But every one of them, and those of you here who are living stones in the Church of God, this is true of you, He says concerning you, your heart, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it". O what a person! what blessedness!

"Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth", and O you will mourn, you will mourn, over the desolations of Zion, you will mourn over the many breaches

that you see in Zion and you will feel this too, that when you see those things that provoke the Lord and offend His majesty, you will be a real mourner.

Now look at this; "The Lord Thy God, in the midst of Thee is mighty, He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing", that is, in Zion, and what is said the Lord accomplishes, and that is what we can look for and pray for. But further than that, when we see here and there such solemn breaches, things that grieve the Holy Spirit, then "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, to whom the reproach of it is a burden". And the reproach that is upon Zion will be a burden, but the Lord regards those that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies.

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". What a mercy it is to dwell together in unity. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, it is like the ointment that was upon the head", and this shows the secret of true communion and the unity of the Spirit in the Church of God, it is because there is a living Head, an exalted Redeemer in all the authority, not only of His Person, but the authority of His finished work. He has rendered infinite satisfaction to the law of God,

"With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below,
But with authority He asks
Enthroned in glory now".

And He is the living anointed Head and that anointing flows down to the Church, to Aaron's beard, to the ministry of the Gospel. If a minister is not under divine anointing, it will be unprofitable. There will be no real spiritual vision, the people will perish with respect to their experience, but it flows down to the beard and down to the skirts of the garment, and O how rich, how invaluable is that divine anointing to speak! and the same anointing to hear, the same Spirit, and then there will be a flowing together to the goodness of the Lord. Lord I have loved it. I believe I can say that. But you must remember the reason why David loved it was because God's honour dwelt there. You see there may be other influences. You may be influenced in the house of God by tradition, by sentiment, by imagination. But if we seek the glory of God and His honour and seek to freely take of Him, for Him to be made unto us heavenly wisdom, our righteousness to justify us, His precious blood to cleanse us thoroughly, and His unsearchable riches to redeem us, it is salvation which is of the Lord.

"I have loved the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". Well, there is another house, we don't know much of it, and yet if we know something of those tastes and sips and glimpses of the glory of Christ in the Church, we have in that measure some knowledge of heaven. That is the place where His glory dwells and He prays for His people. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with Me where I am that they may behold my glory". All your experience and the work of the Holy Ghost in your soul will issue in heaven in eternal glory. I have felt it and expressed it more than once, what we taste of Christ in the Gospel and of His presence in the Sanctuary is an earnest of the inheritance, and I would definitely say this, that it is not something different in its nature, but while we are here in a body of sin and death we have this treasure in earthen vessels. We are met together in all the mortal decay of creatureship, compassed with infirmities, bad memories, painful heads, come short in every way, but still, even so what you get in your soul by the Holy Spirit, by contact with God in Christ now in heaven, is a part of heaven upon earth. Lord, I have loved it. "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". O that is the thing, zealous for the honour and glory of God. It is love, that love that produces that jealousy for the honour and glory of

God. You deprecate anything that should come into the Sanctuary that would vitiate the atmosphere. O I have wished that some of our dear young friends would be given by the Holy Spirit to feel the blessedness of the things of God as revealed in the Gospel, and they are to be communicated by the Spirit to poor sinners.

Well, there is the confession of faith. "Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth", therefore, "Gather not my soul with sinners", when I come to die. Terrible is the consideration. Do you think the wicked have ever prayed this prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners". Well, there was one that did, that was Balaam. "Let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his", but he did not want to gather in the assembly of the saints, he did not love the habitation of God's house, the place where His honour dwells. He gathered with sorcerers, he gathered with hypocrites, with the wicked, those that hated God and would curse His people. O but says David, I think in the 5th verse, "I have hated the congregation of evil doers". Ah, my friends, I remember the time, years ago, when I did not hate the congregation of evil doers. I have been thankful for that word to the Corinthians, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified", so that we cannot point a finger to the most abandoned wretch, no. "Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou hast not received?"

"Gather not my soul with sinners". There is the parable of the tares and the wheat, the disciples said, 'shall we pull up the tares?' but the Lord said no, lest attempting to pull up the tares ye pull up the wheat also, let them grow together until the harvest, and when the harvest is come, bind the tares together in bundles to be burned.' Gather not my soul with those tares that are to be burned. There will not only be bundles of Roman Catholics, there will not only be bundles of Arminians, there will be bundles of Strict Baptists. Gather not my soul with sinners Lord, I have not wished to be among the congregation of evil doers. I think it is the 139th Psalm, he concludes with the same confession; "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?" am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee, I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies". Search me O God, and see whether this is so or not. Search me. "I love the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honour dwelleth". And Lord I have not, do not want to be gathered with sinners here, then gather not my soul with sinners when I come to die. And this evidently was an exercise to David, for he says, "Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock, be not silent unto me, lest if Thou be silent unto me I become like them that go down into the pit," the pit. So that it is wise to consider our latter end, and to consider where our affections really are.

We read in the Book of Kings of those who being let go went to their own company, and you remember the Schunamite, when the prophet called her to give her some reward for her kindness, he said unto her, "Wilt thou be mentioned unto the King?" she said, "I dwell among my own people", "Gather not my soul with sinners". There is a gathering, the devil will gather his, the Lord will send forth His angels to gather His, and what will the harvest be? with respect to our own case? The thing is to look at our lives, see where our affections are, whether they are in heaven. Take notice as to where we are laying up our treasures. "Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also", and where your treasure is, you will be there in eternity. "As a tree falls, so it shall lie".

"Gather not my soul with sinners Lord". Terrible to contemplate, to dwell throughout eternity with those who with gnashing of teeth, curse the Lord whom you desire to love. But the Lord gives another

command in the 50th Psalm; "Gather my saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice". What a mercy to be gathered with the Lord's saints ! and that commandment holds good and is a commandment in the first place to the Lord Jesus, that is what He was sent for. "Go and gather my saints together unto Me", and that is the commission of His ministers, "Gather my saints together unto Me", and that will be the commission of the angels to go forth and gather His saints into heaven itself, what a gathering.

We meet here, full of infirmities, full of mistakes, misgivings, shortcomings, but the Gospel does not come short, there is something very sweet and blessed about that. I feel my shortcomings and failings, how often I have gone up these pulpit stairs after preaching and said going up, I have failed, I have failed, but the Gospel does not, the Lord does not, and I am thankful for this, notwithstanding my feeble ministry. I had this word once when I went up out of the pulpit, full of shame, but that word, "Thou hast a little strength and hast not denied My name", I don't believe I have. But we have earthen vessels, but I love to meet among them now, and if you do, you will be gathered, gathered into His heavenly garner. "Come ye blessed of my Father, enter into the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world".

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and
not edited for publication).