

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Lord's day morning, Aug. 7th, 1960 1012 ✓

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Text: Psalm xxxiv. 3

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It is good to have the eyes turned away from all creatures and afresh directed to the glorious eternal Object of faith and worship. Oh how refreshing it is, and what mighty faith is that faith which stands in God's power! For the Psalm opens: "I will bless the Lord at all times". Doubtless you, with myself, in reading the Word of God, find that we come ~~far~~ lamentably short of the standard that is set up in the Scriptures. When you look at this word, "I will bless the Lord at all times", the worst of times, the most trying afflictions, the deepest sorrows, the heaviest losses, as well as the greatest blessings, the sweetest mercies: "I will bless the Lord at all times". But it will be good for us that, while we shall ever come short while we are here, yet to maintain our aim. When we come short, we should not lower our aim, but keep our aim upon that glorious mark, that prize, and press toward it.

"His praise shall continually be in my mouth." It is a great thing to be able to say "all times" and "continually" to bless the Lord, and to praise Him. But there is this to be said, that whatever standard of conduct and experience is in the Word of God, it is attainable; for all this profession of the saints that have gone before, they were men of like passions with ourselves. We need diligence, we need to be delivered from our deadly carnality and from the entanglements and encumbrances of this life. We need that faith which alone can estimate things at what God values them, to see things as God sees them. A blessed sight, a blessed light, so that we may live by faith and not by sight.

"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." This is the only warrantable boasting the Scriptures allow; so that men may glory, but "let him that glorieth glory in the Lord". So here is a boasting David, and he has before him an audience - "the humble shall hear thereof and be glad". It is very noticeable, here is a boasting man, and the humble hearing his boasting is glad. Do you understand the secret of it? The secret really is in the text: "Oh magnify the Lord with me!" David said, "his soul would make her boast in the Lord". The Psalms are full of the exercises of David's soul. He was a king, but you hear nothing much of his earthly glory, of his kingdom, and of his riches, and of his body; but you hear much about his soul. And we might well consider, in our examination of ourselves, whether in any degree we are exercised in the same way. You look at it in the life that we are now living. What proportion has our lives with respect to our souls and body? Which gets the most attention? Oh it is a great thing to have the Holy Ghost and His heavenly operations and divine influence in the soul to keep us exercised toward God from day to day, so that our souls are made more to us than our bodies, and that eternity is more to us than time! Is it so with us? I have to confess again how far short I feel, but may we have the Spirit's quickening power from time to time to aim at this standard of experience. Oh for an experimental religion, my friends! I am afraid of human logic when it comes to the things of God. We cannot, we must not learn God's

truth as schoolboys learn their tasks. A real religion is an experience. An experience of necessity is a life. Experience is life, and life is experience; and if we are not born again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, then whatever religion we have is mere notion. And notion will do us no good at the swellings of Jordan, nor are they "proof against delusion's blast". "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

How could the humble be glad otherwise? There may be humility where there is no grace, but these are brought to know their utter dependence upon God in body, soul, and circumstances, their dependence upon God as sinners for salvation. And they would not be deceived. There is nothing in all this vain world that can make these humble people glad. I wonder if that is so with us. We have our responsibilities in life, we have our interests, and young people may have their lawful ambitions; and may the Lord bless them in so far as shall be good for them. But when we come to a solemn consideration of the shortness of time, and the certainty of death, and the tremendousness of eternity, is there anything that can make us truly glad and give us cause for rejoicing, save in the Lord? There is much in this second verse - "my soul shall make her boast in the Lord". It seems to show a distinction between the boasting of a natural man in the world. And oh what pride and boasting there is in this modern age! And if you could gather together the things in which men boast and feed their pride, and examine it and magnify it, the more you magnify an earthly portion, the more you discover its death, and decay, and putrefaction, and worthlessness. But "my soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad". And they are the poor: "Blessed are the poor in spirit". The Lord has made them poor. They may be rich, and these humble people that are made glad to hear David boast in the Lord may be honourable people. David was. He was a king; yet hear his confessions of his spiritual poverty. Oh my friends, we do need to realize the important distinction between that which is spiritual and that which is natural, between what is bodily exercise in religion and what is true godliness!

"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof." To hear what there is in the Lord to boast about, to hear about His fulness, undiminishable eternal fulness. "The humble shall hear thereof and be glad." And so he comes to this: "Oh magnify the Lord with me", and he would be speaking to the same audience - "the humble shall hear thereof and be glad". And I believe there are those here who would be truly glad for some streams from the river of God to reach their hearts and bring from Christ those saving benefits that are in His Gospel. "Oh magnify the Lord with me."

There is something very precious in this expression-"magnify". To magnify a thing does not make it any bigger, but it appears so, and it brings distant things near. And what is it that can magnify the Lord but saving faith? That faith which stands in the power of God and is operated in the soul by the Holy Ghost. It brings distant prospects home. "Oh magnify the Lord with me!" I would not

make improper comparison or illustration, but when you take a telescope and look at some distant view, it brings the details to the eye; and so when faith is strengthened by the Holy Spirit in an exercised heart, it magnifies the Lord, brings into the soul in the power, and life, and sweetness of it, what He is in His Person and what there is in Him. Because not only did the Father not spare Him, but delivered Him up for us all; yet how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things. And when faith magnifies the Lord, it has a glimpse of the glory of His Person, and of the all-sufficiency and suitability of everything that is in Him, that He has brought from heaven to earth immortal blessings, heavenly favours, a great salvation. "Oh magnify the Lord with me!"

And sometimes the Holy Spirit will enlarge the heart - and nothing will enlarge the heart as when faith is strengthened to magnify the Lord by some clear manifestation of Christ by the Spirit to the soul. You know what it is at times for things to be very distant. Ah my friends, while we are here below, we shall know the affliction, and burden, and trial that unbelief, and carnal reason, and carnality is. Sometimes the things of God seem out of sight and almost obliterated by the things of time, and you may often fear lest you are one of those thorny-ground hearers; you have so many cares and so many other things which seem to choke everything. Oh but how good it is when the reviving breath of the Spirit in the heart enables you to magnify the Lord!

Let us then look at what faith sees when it magnifies the Lord. And I feel it to be such a good word for the communion of saints. "Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." This is a flowing together to the goodness of the Lord, and when faith views Him first of all there is a view of His blessed Person. What has the truth, the doctrine of the Person of Christ been made to you? I will not apologize for constantly repeating the importance of this in reading the Word of God or hearing the Gospel, to take notice in your own soul as to whether there is a definite connection between the truth you hear and profess, and your experience. There should be a connection with your experience in every doctrine of the Gospel, and that is most vital. There are plenty of people that can look through the Scriptures, and perhaps know far more about the Bible than a poor trembling sinner - far more, and yet know nothing of God and have nothing of a gracious experience. "Oh magnify the Lord with me!"

Does the truth of the Person of Immanuel have any influence upon our experience? You believe it; how do you believe it? I mean this, if God's eternal Son had never condescended to take human nature, there would be nothing. Man fallen would have remained under eternal condemnation. It would ~~not~~ be necessary for God's eternal Son to come in the flesh in order to condemn the wicked. No need for it at all. But there was a necessity for the incarnation of God's dear Son in order to save and redeem the church. Have you ever thought of that? The sentence of condemnation could have been executed from heaven itself by Jehovah, but salvation could not be accomplished by the exercise of naked omnipotence. And this involves the blessed Person of Immanuel, God with us. Now has the Person of Christ had that connection with your own soul, so that you love Him and could

say from your experience:

"I love the Incarnate Mystery,
And there I fix my trust"?

"Oh magnify the Lord with me!" Don't you feel your faith in its roots begin to move, strike downwards, to take hold of this precious Christ? It is all I have got. I can truly say, my friends, that if I have no interest in Christ, I have nothing in my being, and shall have nothing to all eternity but death, and sin, and hell - nothing. I believe it. But to see in Him, in His Person, everything that constitutes heaven, all the righteousness the church will ever need to justify them before God, this is the Gospel. But it cannot be entered into by dint of study, and I would say to you young people, avoid arguments about religion, and if you hear people argue about religion, the safest thing is to pass by, because "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness", and a mystery cannot be acquired; it must be revealed. "Oh magnify the Lord with me!"

But "Lord" here intends Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet all the saving electing love of the Father in the covenant of grace is conveyed in His spiritual blessings in salvation through His dear Son, and conveyed to the hearts of His people by the Holy Ghost - the blessed Trinity. You will never understand the Trinity, but the Trinity is to be known. We conclude our prayers with a great request: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost". That is the only way that we shall ever know the blessed Trinity. And He has made Himself knowable as this one eternal Jehovah, made Himself knowable and possessable in the Person of the Mediator, the Lord Jesus. "Oh magnify the Lord with me!" I don't wonder at what we sing:

"When faith is lifted up the highest,
She sings of none but Christ".

Is He precious, sinner? Is He magnified in your heart at times? Does faith bring Him so that the Lord dwells in your heart by faith, so that in a measure you "comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge"? A great thing to know that which passeth knowledge, and for it to give you some sweet hope of those things which the natural eye has never seen, nor the natural ear ever heard, which has never entered into the heart of a natural man. "Oh magnify the Lord with me!"

I feel bad enough to need Him, lost enough to need Him to be my Saviour, poor enough for His unsearchable riches, weak enough for His strength. It is a great thing to be made fit for Christ. If you are made fit for Him, you will be reduced to wreckage and ruin in yourself; and as we have sometimes said, so it is true, but a great thing to prove it - there are two completenesses. One is in the absolute completeness of our death, wreckage, and ruin in the Fall, so that nothing can be added to it. Its completeness is seen in death, in the grave. But there is another completeness, which blessed be God is altogether greater than that, and Paul says to the Colossians: "Ye are complete in Him". "Oh magnify the Lord with me!" in the completeness, in the perfection

of finished salvation. It is a kingdom, my friends, as we were reading just now in that Psalm (145): "I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty and of Thy wondrous works.... Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations". Now those declarations of truth are eternal. The Bible needs no revision, although proud arrogant man would attempt to revise it and bring it up to modern date. I thought in reading the Psalm just now concerning the great man: "In that very day his thoughts perish" - their great thoughts, scientific thoughts perish. Therefore "happy is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God". "Oh magnify the Lord with me!"

And you will magnify His grace. You cannot enlarge it. John says this: "He must increase; I must decrease". There is a very essential way in which the Lord can never increase. He can never be more than He is, for He is infinite, cannot be contained. His Being is underived, He cannot increase; but John says, "He must increase". He does increase in His manifestations to His dear people. He will increase in His manifested kingdom. Not that it can increase by one individual beyond the election of grace, but it can and does in the manifestation of it.

"Oh magnify the Lord with me" in His grace - sovereign grace! I think myself that this grace is magnified in that word to the Romans, "that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, that as sin has reigned unto death". When you see the Lord, you can look at the worst things in yourself, and the most terrible and frightening things to nature - death, the grave, and corruption; but as sin has reigned unto death and will bring us there and dig our graves, even so as sin is universal in its malignant power, affecting every fibre of our being, and we shall corrupt in the grave - even so, in every fibre of our being "shall grace reign, through righteousness far beyond ~~beyond~~ the grave "unto eternal life". Grace is greater than sin. Oh magnify the grace of God with me!

There is one thing I remember in my little experience, when grace was first made a charming sound to my soul, and it has been ever since - it is free, it is sovereign. And the first hope that I ever had in the grace and mercy of God was after many, many months of trying to keep the law under a sense of solemn condemnation and death in my soul. Oh how I tried to amend my life and keep the law of God, and there was part of a text following me. It was this - "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth"; that is all - those two things. But I was willing, and running, and doing. But I learned this truth, not only to sing it:

"The more I strove against sin's power,

I sinned and stumbled but the more".

But I remember upon a day the Holy Spirit finished that text - "But of God that showeth mercy". Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth. I found I could not run fast enough, and that my will would not reach to the requirements of God's holy law; but when the Lord finished that text - "but of God that showeth mercy", then I could magnify the grace and mercy of the Lord. So could Paul when he came to the conclusion of the 7th of Romans. You see how he learned the truth. My friends, we must have an experimental knowledge in our own souls of the truth; nothing else will stand. And Paul was

able to tell us how God made him a sinner, and then how He saved him from his sins. That blessed 7th of Romans was written after Paul was called by grace. He learned it. It reduced him to this humble poverty: "Oh wretched man that I am!" That is all - nothing more. Have you ever been brought there, to look about you? You may thank God for your blessings, look at your nice home, walk round your garden, be thankful for all, but like Naaman the Syrian. All his honour and glory was nothing to him, because "he was a leper". It speaks of his high position, and the regard that he was held in and his honour; but - "he was a leper". As much as to say- being a leper, to what purpose was all his honour? And so if you are reduced to a wretched man, you will look on all else and have one thing to say: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That is the thing. Oh magnify the grace of God with me!

But he saw this Object: "My soul will make her boast in the Lord". He looked out from that black tunnel - self, from the law in his members, and saw the Hope of Israel: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". "Oh magnify the Lord with me!" You would if you could. We cannot reach it, but my friends, keep aiming at it day by day. You may weep with shame before Him as you feel how different you are from what you ought to be and would be; and I would say if that is so, different from what you will be one day, "for He shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body".

So we magnify His grace and magnify His mercy. Grace and mercy are to be distinguished. They are inseparable. In effect, all the graces of the Spirit are inseparable, but they can be distinguished. I thought of mercy and grace in my own sense of need in this way. In the great storehouse of Christ, it is as though mercy opens the door to a poor sinner that knocks, and sees the poor abject ragged sinner, hungry and thirsty. Mercy goes in and brings the report to grace, and grace brings the supplies. Mercy takes the sinner in, and grace supplies all the needs according to Christ's riches in glory. On magnify the mercy of God! Jeremiah did. He said, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed, because His compassions fail not". Can we say that? I remember saying it in passing Lewes Gaol on one occasion. If you feel the mercy and grace of God in your soul, you will not point to a prison and say, "There's a wretched lot of criminals there". You will say, It is of the Lord's mercy that I am not there.

This takes in providence and creation. Why, faith sees Him everywhere, adores Him, worships Him, wherever He is seen in all places of His dominions, "bless the Lord, O my soul!" And in the main there are three places of His dominions - creation, providence, and grace, and His mercies to His people in a special way are to be observed in each of those dominions. Oh how different it is for a godly farmer to stand and look across his fields of corn, or hops, or fruit with the Love of God in his heart, to view His Redeemer in the creatures! How different that view from a worldly man looking across his fields. Oh magnify the mercy of God to His creatures! Again it was in that precious Psalm that we were reading: "Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing". That not only means every living thing spiritually. That is the highest sense; but the Lord's gracious hand in creation and providence

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maintains all His creatures. But oh to behold Him! Have you ever felt a broken heart under a sense of God's mercies as spread before you upon your table. It might not be many times in your lifetime. It is a shame to have to say it. Mercy in creation and in providence, but eternal and everlasting mercy in grace.
