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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at "Galeed" Chapel,
Brighton, Sunday morning, 1st May 1966

"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.
Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God:
for unto Thee will I pray".

Psalm 5. v 1-2.

These two verses show us the nature of real prayer. The urgency of David's prayer is seen by the various expressions, "Give ear", "Consider", "Hearken", also what he brought before the Lord. "My words, my meditation, my cry", and those things are in real prayer. "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation". You cannot separate prayer or words from meditation. If you have no meditation upon Him to Whom you pray, how can you by faith address your prayer aright to God? If you have no meditation upon yourself, upon your needs and upon your sins, how can you confess them in words? Therefore Solomon says, "The preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue is of the Lord"; they go together, the heart and the tongue, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and therefore, it is very solemn when the heart is a wicked heart.

The text concerns those in whose heart is faith and life, but that is a very important and solemn observation that the Lord made when He said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, thefts, murders. Therefore, we need a new heart. It gives weight to David's prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me". It is well to find these inward, secret exercises that give evidence of the life of God in the soul.

"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation". "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul". That is the very pith of the text. A multitude of thoughts within me are these meditations; thoughts most distressing in me, distractions, thoughts that weaken, thoughts that bring sorrow and distresses, thoughts that alarm us, thoughts concerning the past which we cannot retrieve, thoughts with respect to the future. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight"... and one of the first comforts will be that declaration of the Lord, "My thoughts are not your thoughts", your poor, distressing, trembling thoughts, my thoughts are not like that, "Neither are your ways my ways".

Therefore, in the multitude of my meditations within me, Thy comforts delight my soul. "Give ear to my words, O Lord". It must needs be a great condescension in the Lord to give ear to the words of a poor, insignificant sinner. Perhaps some of you have known what it is when you have tried to pray and you felt really that they were but words that they did not go beyond the ceiling of the room that you were in, almost useless to utter them. Well it is indeed a mystery, the appointment of prayer. But there is a glorious, living Head in Heaven. We sing concerning His humanity -

"That human heart He still retains,
Though throned in highest bliss".

And I feel warranted to add this, that, then those human ears He still retains, though throned in highest bliss. His deity united with human nature in heaven renders Him a Great High Priest, a Glorious and living Head, and therefore, poor sinners may ask, "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation".

Meditation is something different from thinking. You cannot meditate without thinking, but you can think without meditation, and the distinction is important. If I might use a natural figure, you go along the Western Road, along the different shops, some have in their windows articles that are of no interest to you at all, you go by them, but if there is a shop in which there are things you greatly need, you will look in that window and there will be a consideration

of what is shown there and what you really need. Or perhaps it would be better explained - a starving man looking into a shop where there is rich food, he would look at that food and there would be a meditation, there would be a connexion between that food and that deep hunger that was gnawing in his bowels. Meditation.

Well, when you take this in a spiritual way and soul exercise, "Give ear to my words O Lord; consider my meditation", this meditation takes in the whole of the life and all that causes you thoughts, it takes in body and circumstances, your every day life. It takes in your soul and salvation, time and eternity. "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation". Where there is faith and the exercise of the mind in these different matters, it will produce prayer. In the 40th Psalm the Psalmist thanked God that He did give ear to his words. "I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me and heard my cry". "Consider my meditation". It is a prayer for the Lord to draw near and to look at things you look at. And we would try and consider, as enabled, some of the meditations that occupy a tried and exercised soul, and perhaps the first thing would be yourself. You meditate upon yourself. While you may confess that you are utterly unworthy and feel to be worthless, and in sincerity, yet, this is the truth, there is nothing so valuable to you as yourself, nothing, and if we consider that according to that Scripture, "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?", lose himself which is the same thing. I say again, there is nothing more valuable to you than yourself, although you may be brought to confess with honesty, with Job, "Behold I am vile". So that there will be an exercise, a meditation from time to time upon yourself, and here the Psalmist asks the Lord to come and meditate with him, consider the matter that I am meditating on Lord, and that meditation brings me to pray unto Thee. "Give ear unto my words". Now this is real prayer.

For instance, this meditation of self will be the result of the teaching of the Spirit, and I feel that it cannot be too often emphasised that we are in the ruins of the fall, completely dead, our wound is incurable, our bruise is grievous and, as it says in Jeremiah, "Thou hast no healing medicine", now that is a meditation, not of something outside of you to read in a book, not some mere theory, but a real experience.

"Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation", about myself, Lord come and join in that meditation, that survey, "seach me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting". So that is what is brought forth by the Spirit in the exercise of a meditation upon self, it will bring out prayer and then you will need the Lord to give ear to those words, to those prayers. "Consider my meditation".

Then there will be meditation with respect to your providences. That is a very instructive word in the Proverbs, "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him". You might have something before you and you have to meditate on it because it is your pathway, it brings sorrow to your heart, grief to your mind. You might have before you disasters, calamities, you may have many fears about the morrow. You may have many enemies, you may be passing through adversities, you may have a bag with holes to put your wages in. Well, no man knows hatred by what is before him. For we were reading just now, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest and teachest him out of Thy law". He is a blessed man, and if the Lord uses these things, for chastening. "No man knoweth either love or hatred". You may have a healthy body, a prosperous business, a family well established, and placed, you cannot infallibly read love upon that. "The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord". "Promotion cometh not from the North, nor from the South, nor from the West, but God is the judge, He setteth up one and bringeth down another". Therefore, you look at these things,

you are in them, you must meditate upon them. You wonder where the scene will end, it may be a weak body, you may be in distress or in despair, there may be things in your circumstances, relative or commercially and you have to deal with them, and there is a meditation. And as you do so where there is faith and life it will bring out prayer and that is the mercy of it.

Returning to that word we mentioned, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest and teatest him out of Thy law that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity while a pit is being dug for the wicked". Here is a poor man meditating sorrow, meditating things that threaten his overthrow, enemies riding over his head, affliction in his body, adversity in his business, trouble in his family and yet as he meditates and has to do with and deal with those matters, the Lord is with him. On the other hand, here is a man who is spreading himself like a green bay tree, has more than heart could wish, and there is a pit being dug for that man.

"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation". Now we have each got a different meditation, they are your things. "He that handles a matter wisely", they are your matters, they belong to you, you have responsibilities, you must attend to your duties, circumstances, relationships properly, and what a mercy when the Lord comes into these things in answer to your prayer. There is something very blessedly simple in this word, "Consider my meditation", for the Psalmist must have been considering it himself or else he would not meditate. "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation".

Well, this as sanctified will be used by the Spirit to spread the wings of faith and rise above these meditations and bring us to meditate upon God. We were reading at the Prayer Meeting concerning His kingdom and His greatness, His greatness is unsearchable, "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness, and men shall speak of Thy might, of Thy terrible acts, and I will declare Thy greatness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy". Now when your meditations have been concerning yourself, your condition as a poor, unworthy, ruined sinner, and your position in providence, through the midst of tribulation, as you meditate on those things and ask the Lord to draw near and to survey the scene with you, so your soul will live, and your affections will be set upon things above, it will bring you into the 104th Psalm: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord", now that is just His purpose. O my friends, how many words, how much prayer, how many praises, what glory would redound to the Lord if we had a path of ease with no trouble, with no difficulty? But here we are, and the Lord makes use of it. It is wonderful. He even makes use of what we are as self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners in a wilderness world, a world that lies in wickedness and all the infirmities and distresses and pains and weaknesses, He makes use of it all, it makes up meditation.

It comes to the mind, in the 90th Psalm, "We spend our years as a tale that is told", in the margin there you will find it says, 'we spend our years as a meditation,' it is a tale that is told, and we are passing, whatever your trouble may be it is all passing, but there are those things that will never pass, and as the Lord draws near to you in your meditation, and gives you prayer, it will raise you from passing things, to those things that are eternal.

"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation". And it may be to consider some deep trouble, to consider some set-fast trial, to consider some impossibility and yet it must be faced, "Lord, come and look at it with me," it is very sweet, it is childlike faith, and "Except ye become as little children ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom". You cannot take things too small to the Lord, you cannot take things too great; but to have the simplicity and sense of faith and take them to the Lord and say, Lord, come and consider this matter with me, I have no wisdom, I need life, heavenly light to direct me, come Lord; and spread the matter before Him. "Show me the way wherein

I should walk", and it will gradually lift you toward God. Well, that is just what brought Job to that point, we were touching lately, "I know Thou canst do everything", but it will be through the exercises of soul, and body and circumstances and this is how God is known. Is that how you know Him? We talk a lot about Him; you may talk a lot about Him and be lost with it all. To talk about Him is not to know Him, to know Him is to be brought into places where you must have Him, where He demonstrates His omnipotence, where He exercises His invincible, sovereign, saving grace. "Consider my meditation". Then you will begin to meditate upon the Lord, and so you go out of self, and if you are heavily laden and afflicted, you will say, my affliction is light after all. Some of our dear friends, one especially, dear Mrs. Bridgeland, she has got an affliction that will last the rest of her life, O what a meditation she has got in her poor body! but if she could say, "give ear to my words O Lord, consider my meditation", look at me Lord, look at my state, What then? "O my light affliction is but for a moment and is working for me an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory". And so, this meditation of faith, even in your matters concerning this life, will raise your soul above the earth and draw your affections and soul toward God, and then you will lose yourself, you will remember your misery no more. Then you will have strong drink that is given to him that is ready to perish, and wine for the heavy in heart.

So you will begin to meditate upon the Lord, and that is something different. You will meditate upon His sovereignty. Look at the woman - you will find it through the Scriptures, but that is not where you will want to find it, essentially you will want to find it in your heart, in your experience. There was that woman, She showed kindness to Elisha as he went by from time to time with his servant, and she made him a little room with a stool and a candlestick, and he wished to reward her, and he said, "Wilt thou be mentioned unto the King?" she said, no I do not want to be mentioned unto the King, I dwell among my own people; then said the Prophet, what shall be done for thee?" But she had no child, and the Lord gave her a promise through Elisha and she had a child and he died, the very gift died, "and she said to her husband, saddle the ass, I will go to the man of God, and her husband said, it is no use, it is not the Sabbath day, it is not the new moon". "Consider my meditation...give ear to my words O Lord". What did she say to her husband? "It shall be well" and Elisha's servant met her on the way and he said, "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy child? Is it well with thy husband?" and she said it is well". The child was dead. "Give ear to my meditation, O Lord, consider my words", and the Lord comes down into whatever is before you, whatever your meditation is, and it will bring you into soul meditation.

It is a point which is worth considering, those of you who are really feeling after, to know where you are, you want a token from God, now do you find this, you may have business difficulties, anxieties, family troubles, or you may have some surprise come to your poor body, and it makes a meditation, but do you find these things are the means of producing and giving new life to prayer? I believe everything concerning a child of God, sooner or later, turns to soul exercise, even if the matter itself is nothing to do with the soul, it will cause you to pray. "Give ear to my words O Lord, consider my meditation". And there may be some who are nearing the swellings of Jordan, and they have much meditation upon their end. They may meditate like this,

"When Thou my righteous judge shall come,
To call thy ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?"

Lord, consider that meditation and give ear to my words, hearken to the voice of my cry. O this will show you whether you are alive or dead, the nature of your prayers. This is the kingdom of heaven suffering violence. There will be times when your soul exercise is so keen that you will feel within yourself, you must have Him. First

under a sense of the power of the Devil and of sin, you must have One greater than yourself and greater than the Devil. Then you pray, and so some are meditating, concerned about their latter end, and in this connexion, what a prayer this is, give ear to my words, consider my meditation about my latter end. Moses said that was wise, "O that the people were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end". He said it was wise to do so. The world say it is foolish, put off the evil day if they could, they would live for ever, but they won't, there will be no escape in that warfare. O to have therefore, meditation, and to lay up prayer against the time to come, the day of death, as you meditate upon it you pray -

"Prepare me gracious God,
To stand before Thy face".

and when people are old, although the young often die, but the old must, they feel that the sands of time are sinking and they feel that they must soon bid farewell to all below and shut their eyes upon the sins of this world, it is a meditation and it is a real thing. Death is real and you want something real to meet it with, What then ? "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation" about my end.

Paul had such a meditation in that direction that he said, "I count all things but dung that I might win Christ and be found in Him" at last. What else matters ? You may be in tribulation and adversity now, but that is a passing thing. "Seeing therefore, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?" Is that all ? No. "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God". And that is a meditation, a looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, and as you do so you want this glorious Lord to draw near to you, that is what I felt about this prayer; "Consider my meditation", as though, in sincerity and simplicity a child of God should say, 'Lord, come and meditate with me about this matter'. It is just this."Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass".

"Hearken to the voice of my cry". There is a cry in his meditation, in his prayer, and that is a very important thing to notice. There are plenty of people have as much trouble as a child of God has, but there is no meditation in the trouble and there is no cry because there is no life. Be thankful if in your experience you have a cry, a living cry, be thankful if you have aspired to the height of a groan. O I should be thankful to have a groan in my soul according to the Romans, "He maketh intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered". So that you see the importance of prayer.

"Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God". O if God is our God, He is for us, "and if God be for us who can be against us ?" His sovereignty is exercised on our behalf, for our benefit, for our salvation. "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God". If He is our God, He must be our God in Christ; it will make the Person of Christ in His deity uniting with human nature, to be exceedingly precious and important. No prayer but for that, and I would say again, it is a mystery that the worst thing, unutterably awful, unutterably vile, inexpressibly wretched, the absence of all good, the presence of all evil and all corruption, that very thing, under the name of sin, is just that for which the Lord Jesus came, to remove sin from the Church.

"Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God". "For unto Thee will I pray" and Thee only. "My soul wait thou only upon God, my expectation is from Him". What expectation can you have from anybody else ? But, have you an expectation from God ? His people can expect all that heaven holds good, they can expect all that is promised in this precious word, all the treasures of it, and this belongs to His people, and He has magnified this Word, He is a God that cannot lie and therefore, the Word of God can never be broken. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away"

What a God to pray to ! But if we thus pray to God we must believe that He is, and that believing that He is, is not nominal, I believe most people, at least that would consider themselves at all Christians, if you was to say, Do you believe in God ? they would say yes, but this believing in God, that He is, is a knowledge of Him. You may believe in God because the Bible speaks about Him, but that is not believing to the saving of the soul. Do you believe that He is by what He has done for you ? What He has revealed to you as He has manifest Himself ? Do you believe in Him because there is revealed in Him through Christ that which alone will meet you case ? Do you believe in Him as a Saviour because the Holy Spirit has revealed you to yourself as a ruined sinner ? Do you believe in His infinite fulness because you have been taught your universal destitution and emptiness ?

"Unto Thee, O Lord, will I pray". Thee only. Well, if these few rambling thoughts are true, it does give us to see the inside of vital godliness, and to see this, you must go deeper than public worship, deeper than official religion. O how I have feared those two things, I am necessarily involved in public religion and official religion, but there is no virtue in that whatever. I have sometimes said, that if I die and my hope is placed upon my preaching, I shall be lost. But, if I die and my hope is placed upon Him of Whom I preach, it will be well; and it may be said the same to you, if you die upon your hearing, you will be lost, but if you die upon Him of Whom you hear, it will be well. It comes to this, "For unto Thee will I pray", and take the two things together and see the completeness of it, whatever state you are in, my friends, it does not matter, it is in this meditation, "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation, hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto Thee will I pray".

Amen

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).