

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on
1041 Lord's Day morning, June 24th, 1962.

La Gr 692

1041
Text: Psalm li. 10-12.

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

We cannot express the vital truth and doctrine contained in this rich Psalm. The 53rd of Isaiah (also read), blessed be God, swallows it up. There is exercised in the condition of David's experience the whole of the blessed Gospel. It fits those blessed chapters especially, the 9th and 10th of the Hebrews, that speak of the great High Priest and His sacrifice for sin. It declares even in view of David's sin, and oh that it might be so in the heart of any uttermost sinner - "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"! This Psalm digs down far deeper than all notion. You will never hear a Revivalist have much to do with this Psalm. It is deeper; it goes down to the very core. It shows us the cause of death and of all the sorrow and misery that is throughout the whole world. And it is to be remembered that this Psalm was not inspired for David's sake alone. I have a remark on my mind, but I would be careful how I utter it. I believe that the Lord permitted David to fall. God was not the Author of sin, but He permitted David to fall, to give a record of His Spirit's work in a repenting sinner's heart; and therefore this Psalm represents the experience, and is an example of true repentance throughout all ages. And there is this too - I believe that everyone taught of the Spirit has found this Psalm to express their confessions and their repentance toward God.

The language of the Psalm is in the first and second persons only. No third person in the Psalm. It is "Have mercy upon me according to Thy loving-kindness". Exactly the same as the publican in the Temple: "God be merciful to me a sinner". And if we are being taught of the Spirit, we shall from time to time be brought alone with God, especially relative to our fallen state and condition as sinners, as well as in the midst of our calamities, and afflictions, and fears, as was Jacob. He had nothing in all his riches or with all his servants that could deliver him from Esau. He dismissed everything and was alone with God. And if we are being led forth by the right way, we shall find that the Lord will so deal with us in His leadings, that we shall be brought alone with God, and especially with regard to our salvation.

"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Well, he had sinned of course in committing adultery and murder. It reminds me of a remark by the late J. K. Popham; I have often thought of the truth of it. He said, "The act of sin may be transient, but the sin itself is permanent; and it is against an infinite and eternal God that sin is committed". This is a sweet bitter Psalm. I have walked up and down in it, and it has walked up and down in me, many a night. It is a relief. And so David goes right to the beginning of things and says: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me". Therefore nothing would serve the purpose but the new creation: "Create in me a clean heart" - nothing less. By experience he proved the truth of universal sin and death, and we shall have to prove it. I believe that I am beginning to learn that from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head, I am nought but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, and we are incurable lepers

and there is not a single pin-point in our being that is not contaminated with sin and death. David knew it.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Oh how penetrating was this conviction, and how penetrating was his repentance! But he was not in despair. I sometimes feel to sink lower than David. Where once an incorruptible seed of life is, that can never die. No, it will not make us think lightly of sin; but where life is, such a one will never be left to sink into utter despair. So that he begins to pray. It is wonderful for a sinner to pray. It may be some of you, as we read the Psalm and anticipated the matter of sin, might have thought, "Well I have got a lot of trouble. Things are very contrary; much affliction". Perhaps you would rather I had taken that line of things. But my friends, this is the greatest affliction and the only real trouble to a child of God. If sin is pardoned, we are secure. I believe that, but I never like to leave that there. No; perhaps some of you understand what I mean. We don't want sin pardoned just to be secure from punishment and hell; but if sin is pardoned then we are happy. That alone can bring us peace.

"Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Here he honoured the Lord. We may think we honour the Lord if we begin to say that our sin is too great to be forgiven. It is very dishonouring to the Lord. I know we may sink so low as to wonder whether mercy and pardon will ever reach us. That is another thing; but as bad as I am, I do believe that

"Thy precious blood, dear dying Lamb,
Can make my world of sin remove".

I believe that, and so did David. Otherwise he would never have prayed, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow". He even raised his voice a little higher: "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice". Oh this is faith struggling in the depths! This is the life of God, that incorruptible seed germinating underneath the earth.

"Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out mine iniquity." And so you see it is "Me", and "I", and "Thou", and "Thine". Shut up unto God. His eyes upon the atonement of Christ. Oh sinner, has it ever given a thrill of sacred joy through your very frame to realize that this Man can save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him? And so he continues the prayer. "Create in me a clean heart." He gets to the heart, and he wants a creation. He doesn't ask the Lord to reform him. He doesn't ask the Lord to renovate his old heart, but to create a clean one. The expression is so complete.

"Create in me a clean heart." You remember that the Lord explained this in His teaching. He said, it is not that which goeth into a man that defileth him, but that which cometh out of the heart, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, thefts, murders. They come from within, and therefore David says, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity". To be washed thoroughly is of no use at all. The Pharisees could do that, and washed the outside of the cups and platters. We can wash the outside, and whitewash it; but David was dealt with in his heart, and nothing but a creation could serve his purpose. "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" He commences on the ground of mercy, but it was upon the ground of God's mercy. "Have mercy upon me, O God! Create in me a clean heart, O God!" I say, we

shall be brought alone before Him and Him alone. It is because of this teaching David also teaches us, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for from Him cometh my expectation". And there is hope in this confessing sinner, a sweet hope. The christian's hope can never fail, however deep he sinks. Neither can his faith be overcome, because it stands in the power of God.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God!" Because if the heart is right, everything else must be right. If the heart is wrong, everything else is wrong. From the heart proceeds either spirituality of mind, or carnality and death. Oh do some of you feel to long for this creation, a clean heart? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The influence of a broken and contrite, clean, pure heart influences the whole being. From such a heart rise heavenly affections, spiritual thoughts, meditations. In such a heart is the fear of God that regulates every action. And from such a heart there is true worship, because it is a living heart, a living soul.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me." The margin is, "a constant spirit". He had been moved. He had deeply fallen. He had broken his bones. He had covered himself with confusion and shame. And he prayed for renewing - "renew a right spirit within me". In backsliding and sin we backslide from all the influences of grace into all the influences of our nature. So David knew what a wrong spirit was. You will trace this Psalm, this confession, this repentance, this experience of inward corruptions even in some of his most blessed expressions concerning his love to the Lord Jesus. Oh how it made him transparent and honest! "Search me, O God! and know my heart." Not somebody else's; 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." Ah my friends, this exercise of soul by the Spirit will make us healthy! We may have a bulky religion without it. There may be many things that would please the natural itching ears; but these are the vital things of the Spirit's teaching in the heart.

"Renew a right spirit within me; deliver me from every wrong spirit." And the spirit is the most important thing. Paul says, "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, spiritual wickedness in high places". You take the world at large. There is no thing that is wrong; it is the spirit that is wrong and dangerous. Strikes, and conflicts, and riots - it is the spirit that is dangerous. I feel it in my own self. Oh the spirit of jealousy and enmity, and every evil spirit is powerful. The spirit that now prevails of jealousy and suspicion among the nations, it is the spirit that is powerful. From the spirit there are murders and every kind of evil. Oh how we should watch our spirit, whether in our home, or in business, or the church of God! It is the spirit that is powerful, not that which is material. No, it is not the gun that shoots a person, it is the spirit of the person that takes it. Oh spirit, how solemn it is! And when I know my own spirit, I am not safe. Oh how violent the spirit can be! And David knew what spirit he was of when he took Bathsheba, and when he committed that murder. The day before he had not committed a public crime, but now he was covered with shame as an adulterer. The day before he knew no blood-guiltiness, but now he was blood-guilty.

"Renew a right spirit within me", the spirit of the fear of God,

the spirit of humility, the spirit of grace, the spirit of prayer, the spirit of patience and forbearance. So he continues the prayer - "Cast me not away from Thy presence". One thing there seems evident, that while the Lord was hiding His face, David felt there was a degree of the Lord's presence with him, even if he had no joy of it. Otherwise he could not pray, "Cast me not away from Thy presence". It was a great comfort to David to believe that which we sometimes sing:

"Did Jesus once upon me shine?

Then Jesus is for ever mine"; and

"Whom once He loves, He ~~never~~ leaves,

But loves them to the end".

So that he felt that the Lord had not given him over unto death, and to a reprobate mind. Had He done so, he would never have prayed again, but would have done what Judas did, hanged himself. He would indeed. There is something about this Psalm, and this prayer, and this confessing great sinner, which suits me well. Yes, dear David and Peter, who fell very foully, yet they did not fall into despair, nor out of the hands of the Good Shepherd.

"Cast me not away from Thy presence." A terrible thing if the Lord should cast us away from His presence even in experience now! He will all the wicked in the day of judgment: "Depart from Me, ye cursed!" It will be very solemn to hear that terrible sentence. David knew what His presence was. If we are cast away from the presence of the Lord, we are cast away from all that He is and every influence of His grace. We are cast away from light and life, from salvation, from mercy, from redemption, from blood. You think of it! Oh that we could feel as David did! "Cast me not away from Thy presence." I cannot but feel, even in his condition, that he had some sense of the sacredness, the blessedness of the presence of the Lord that he had enjoyed.

"Depart from Thee? 'Tis death, 'tis more;

'Tis endless ruin, deep despair!"

How many of us can pray this Psalm, this prayer? Only sinners can. I have thought how very sacredly this Psalm and the 53rd of Isaiah go together. Oh there we see all the ingredients of salvation! There we see the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, more full of grace than His people are of sin. And here we see a wrestling man, though guilty, wrestling though he has broken bones, at the throne of grace with his eye upon Calvary. We ought to be thankful for the hymns. They are indeed a precious heritage.

"Oft as sin, my soul, assails thee,

Turn thy eyes to Jesus' blood."

A fountain opened for that specific purpose, for sin and for uncleanness.

"Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." Again he goes to vital things. This Psalm is full of vital experience. To be cast away from the presence of the Lord and to have the Holy Ghost taken from us, would leave us ruined, would leave us undone to all eternity, would leave us in the bond of iniquity, would sink us lower than the grave. Of course, where the Holy Spirit is once given, He will never depart. You might wonder then why David should pray, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me". We said lately that faith takes nothing for granted. And while a man cannot be born again twice, yet through backsliding and sin he can bring himself into such a posi-

tion that he will need exercised in his heart the same grace, he will need the same God, he will need the same deliverance to restore him as he needed to regenerate him, the same Spirit to quicken him afresh, to bring divine pardon from time to time. And blessed be God, the power of the blood of Christ can be proved again and again.

David saw this too, that the Lord's tender mercies were a multitude: "According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions". His sins were a multitude, but God's loving-kindness and tender mercies were a greater multitude. I venture to repeat what I have said before, and that is that everything in Christ, the Mediator, the Redeemer, is greater than everything in sin. Ah it is, and it will be an amazing truth to one who feels that he is all sin in himself, and nothing else! For faith by the Spirit to view One who has a fulness infinitely greater than of merit, and holiness, and righteousness, and purity than we have of sin! It is the only hope set before us, and only so could we ever sing,

"Come ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore".

"Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." If we had no Holy Spirit, we should have no light. It is only His inshining that brings true light to see the things of God. We should have no application of the truth, no understanding of the Word of God, should never pray, if we were destitute of the Spirit.

Then he rises one point higher: "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation". He had not lost salvation, but he had sinned away the joy of it, and therefore he was in soul-darkness and misery, in bondage, in prison. It would be a mercy if we had evidence of the like precious faith and life, by feeling the inward activity and motions of the Spirit as are evident in this Psalm. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." This could only be by the removal of his guilt. We cannot have the joy of salvation and guilt upon the conscience at the same time. And what is the joy of salvation? If you come to look at what salvation is, it is divine and expressed by all the doctrines of the Gospel. The Gospel is salvation, which shows to us its blessed and eternal ingredients. Well, the joy of salvation is the joy of the Gospel. It is for the Gospel to do in us just what it is, and to accomplish in us what it declares. The joy of salvation for instance is to feel again the conquest of grace in the heart.

"Oh the happiness arising

From the power of grace within!"

That is the joy of salvation. And the joy of salvation is for the Holy Spirit to take of the efficacy of Christ's precious blood and make it effectual in our hearts and consciences, to bring in Calvary's peace, peace which nothing can disturb; for the blood of Christ to make the distant nigh. That will be the joy of salvation.

The joy of salvation too would be a restoration of communion with the Lord. Oh communion is suspended when we backslide into sin, and how solemn it is for the Word of God to be sealed, and to have no joy in the house of God, whereas He has promised to make even the strangers to be joyful in the house of prayer! How solemn it is when the Lord is silent in the ministry, and when He shuts you up and you cannot pray! But oh to be restored, to have prayer restored in the spirit and power of it, to feel that sweet relief in pouring out your heart before the Lord, and to have the joy of worship restored, the joy of

an inward exercise of faith upon the Son of God, the joy of access unto Him and to feel the heavens rent, for Him to pour out water upon him that is thirsty, communications from heaven to the soul, to sit once more under the preaching of the Gospel so as to sit before the Lord, and for the Spirit to lead you into the truth as into the very land of the living! "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation."

But this is to be noticed - David did not say, "If Lord Thou dost answer that prayer and forgive my sins, create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me, and restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, I shall get on quite all right, I shall manage then". No, "And uphold me with Thy free Spirit". He had broken his bones once. A child is very careful about the fire who has been burned. "Uphold me with Thy free Spirit." "Oh the freeness and sovereignty of love, of divine grace, and of the Spirit! How free He comes! Yes, when the Lord turns the captivity of His people, there is nothing that can hinder the coming of the Spirit. "Uphold me", keep me from falling again, uphold my faith, uphold me in a profession of religion that I may hold fast the profession of faith when wavering. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Well, may the Lord exercise our hearts according to this Psalm, and it would be well with us in every other consideration. If our hearts are made right, everything will be right, our providences will be right. Oh may the Lord look upon us!
