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Sermon preached by Mr. F.L.Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Psalm 65:4

I find it necessary for myself to be reminded of what a great responsibility and solemnity it is to speak. A political speech is entirely different in its nature, and concerned with the inferior things of the kingdoms of this world; but when we are occupied with those things that are eternal, we have need to take heed how we speak and how we hear. And it would be a good exercise if we were for one moment to consider how we have come this evening, and how we intend to hear. You might say: "Well, what do you just mean?" It is very possible to hear about things, and it is possible to talk about them. If that is all, there would be no profit. In speaking we need to be as was Haggai, "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message." He was in the message that he had to deliver. And so with respect to hearing; we shall not profit unless we are inside of the truth that we hear.

As for instance the text and the psalm: "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion." Now if we are exercised, there will be that going on in our hearts that will be asking questions. It is no small indication of a God-given faith if you find questions asked inside in response to the Scriptures and to the preaching of the Gospel. "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion." Are we waiting? That is the point. It speaks to characters and experiences. That is the important thing. And so here: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest." And you may have taken notice of those declarations of blessedness that are throughout the Word of God, and see what constitutes blessedness and what characters are blessed, and then look at yourself as to whether you have any evidence in experience that corresponds with those who are under the blessing of the Lord: **"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest."**

There are some who are ignorant of the righteousness of God, ignorant of the God of righteousness, who go about to establish their own righteousness, and suppose that God comes across certain people and chooses them. But Paul, writing to the Ephesians, gives up the truth, and that blessed truth that accounts for any favour or any blessing in the soul, for it is "according as He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world." And that is where this text issues from: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest." And the blessings that belong to him in Christ Jesus are enumerated in the first chapter of Ephesians - one of the richest chapters in the Bible. O how it does set forth the exceeding great, and unsearchable, and eternal riches that belong to His people in Christ Jesus! He must be a blessed man. But the remainder of the text comes to experience. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest" points to the blessed original source of all blessedness in the love of the Father, His electing, sovereign, immutable, everlasting love. But then in time there is the work of the Holy Ghost, which is a result of electing love; it is a result of predestinating grace. And the remainder of the text shows the experience of those who are the election of grace.

And the first thing is: "causest to approach unto Thee." It is a very similar word, and intends the same experience, in Jeremiah: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me." That was before the world

was. God's eye was upon Jeremiah, as upon all His people. His love was set upon him in the covenant of grace. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore" – consequently – "with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." So that if yen ever know what it is in your soul to be drawn unto the Lord Jesus, there is a Scriptural warrant to conclude that you have an interest in electing love and covenant grace, so that it is no small thing to be drawn.

But we would look at some ways in which the Lord causes people to approach unto Him. It does not say: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and approaches unto Thee," but "the man whom Thou choosest and **causest to approach** unto Thee." Now the first influence which causes a poor sinner to approach unto the Lord is when the Lord turns him to destruction in himself, when he is brought to feel that he is exposed to the holy just law of God, when he is pursued by the law of God, and by the Word of God, and by his conscience, and by sin. He is shut up from every way of escape, and there is but one way open to him, because the law of God with respect to His people has a different end to it from what it has to the wicked. The end of the law to the wicked is condemnation, and the end of the law to His elect people is condemnation in their conscience, but in such a way that it becomes a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. And that is the first way that they are caused, obliged, compelled to approach unto God. Do you ever remember being thus shut up to Him; no other escape, no other refuge, no other hope? It brings us to see how necessary, too, it is to be exercised in singing our hymns, because that experience takes in what we sing. Only when we sing it, look inside:

*No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell. (John Berridge)*

– nothing else. Have you been taught that? You know whether you have or not. Such is our legality that we will seek for something in ourselves as long as we can. Such is the pride, independence of our nature, that it is the last thing that we will do is to be saved in God's way. But He will bring us to such a spot that we shall be compelled to approach unto Him.

"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee." It shows us this truth too, that whereas it is by grace ye are saved and nothing else at all, nothing added to that grace, yet in experience and the method of salvation, it is through faith. O what a lot that explains! Had it been the will of God that "by grace ye are saved," and His saved people immune from all conflict and trouble, so as it is with an earthly king or prince. They are carried through this life without all the burdens, and cares, and poverty, and anxieties of the common people. It might have pleased the Lord that the "children of a King" should go through life's journey in ease and comfort, and occupy the high places in the land, but it was not His method. Now do you feel that? O there are periods of my life, dispensations and experiences that I feel I could never face again, never go through them again. But in looking back, my friends, I can see and feel the teaching to profit. O what knowledge of God is gained by His merciful manifestations to His people in a path of the trial of faith! And in these things we gather from time to time some evidences of our election. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest etc."

I have often admired this term: "caused." There are several instances in the Scriptures which have the same import, as for instance that in Ezekiel: "I will **cause** you to pass under the rod and bring you into the bond of the covenant." I will cause you to pass under the rod; I will see that you do; I will so hedge up your path and bring weakness on all your strength, and ignorance on all your wisdom, that you will have to pass under the rod. And David, when he was in perplexity, in an urgent pressing case, prayed for the same things: "**Cause** me to know the way wherein I should walk." There seemed something stronger than he; so "show me the way." If you were in a city a stranger, and there were many, many roads, you might ask someone the way to a certain place, and they would tell you. But you might say to them, "I really shall never remember to find it." But David prayed, "Cause me to know it, take me round every bend, show me every street, give me to see every sign." And so it is with those who are brought into a concern about their soul's salvation. The Lord will **cause** them to approach unto Him.

The next great thing which causes a poor sinner to approach unto the Lord is when the Holy Spirit opens before them the all-sufficiency and suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, those two things go together, and I feel persuaded of this, that those of you who have been long in the way will conclude that those two things will go together as long as you live. There will be a necessity brought to bear upon you because of what you are and always will be while you live, nothing but a ruined wrecked sinner, and the Lord Jesus in all the completeness, and sufficiency, and fulness of His grace. And those two things will cause you to approach unto Him. Well, has it? Have we got those two things in our experience? I don't say that you have all found Him, that you are satisfied; but if you have been rightly convinced of sin and brought to see the end of all perfection in your flesh, and believe the report of the Gospel, and had some view of the eternal favours that belong to His people, you will be seeking them. And to seek Him is to approach unto Him. To seek Him and to approach unto Him is to believe in Him. And there will be this element in it which will give you some more indication of how you stand, that in seeking Him and going out of self unto Christ, He will be exceedingly precious to your soul before you have a felt assurance of faith of your interest in Him. He is precious in the need of Him, precious in seeking Him, but He is unspeakably precious in the possession of Him.

"Blessed is the man etc." And then again with respect to the soul, the Lord will join providence to grace. "He led them about and instructed them." "He leads the blind in a way they knew not, and in paths that they have not known." Has He ever done that – ever led you into mazy paths that you knew not and never walked heretofore? This is weaning. David said: "O Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters or things too high for me. Surely I have behaved myself and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child." And this will bring you to approach unto Him. It is not a child that is being weaned, because there is rebellion, kicking, and plunging, and pulling. It is very pathetic to see a child 'being weaned of its mother. But David said: "I have behaved and quieted myself as a child weaned from its mother." It gives up its rebellion, its plunging, its tossing, its pulling, has to give it all up. It is of no use. And then it lies submissive in the mother's lap, and knows no will but hers. And the Lord will cause you to approach unto Him by weaning you from everything and everybody else.

Now look at that point. Have you anything in your life's experience which has weaned you from yourself, weaned you from the earth and its brassy toys, weaned you from seeking after honour, wealth, and fame in this poor world? And for this reason – there is always a reason for things, and we may look at our profession point by point and see whether we have got a reason for what we profess. The reason is because the blessed Spirit shows us something infinitely better, and of a different nature from what this world can afford. And not only that, but because in regeneration there is a heavenly spiritual nature created, which can only live upon God, live upon eternal realities, that provision that is in the Gospel. So you will approach unto Him for those blessings, and no other blessing will do. And you can find them nowhere else. It was an experience of Jabez – it is all the record we have of him. His obituary would not have taken up much room: "O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!" He approached unto God. You will see in the background of his prayer that he had explored and surveyed everything else in this world, and there was not a blessing indeed in it. There are blessings which end – the kindness of God in His providence, His wonderful creation – but they will end. He wanted something that would never en – a "blessing indeed."

And so it was with David when he approached unto the Lord. He saw that there were divine favours: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with (exactly the same) salvation." He is a blessed man whom Thou choolest, and because he is chosen to obtain eternal salvation, chosen to the boundless inheritance of the saints, chosen to be with God to behold the glory of Christ, because he is chosen, the Lord will so deal with him inside in his soul, outside in his circumstances, in His providence, to compel him to approach unto God. So we may just look at that point. Do we follow the truth, as we do follow it, and as it is revealed in the Scriptures, because we are compelled to? You might say, "Well now, what do you mean?" I mean this. There is no other religion, there is no other truth, that will reach our case. I might say this – and I say it soberly – I am too bad for any other religion. There are all kinds of religion in the world, but only one is right. You might say to me, and some perhaps would be glad to say it: "I suppose you think that that right religion is the Strict Baptist's." No I don't. I will tell you the only religion that is right. It is the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the right one. And how will you know it? He will compel you to it. Every other will be useless. When you are brought to the state and condition of the publican in the temple, there is no other righteousness but that of the Lord Jesus, no other blood but His precious blood shed upon Calvary, no other mercy but the mercy of God in Christ, mercy joined with power. No other grace but divine grace, precious grace.

I was thinking about it, walking up the street this morning, feeling as I do from day to day a body of sin and death. And it is in 'the text: "Caused to approach unto Thee." It was this, a peculiar experience really. I did not wish to be able to exert such a control over myself as to subdue the power of sin. Now you might say, "Well, I should have thought that was just what you would want." Well, something better came into my mind to seek, and it was that one great full word: "grace." And the Lord says this: "Sin shall not have dominion over you" – not because you will be exercising your will and power to get the upper hand of it. Not that at all. But something better than that: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." O grace did shine again for a few seconds, walking up the road this morning! It seemed as though I wanted to continue repeating those two words: "under grace" – all-sufficient grace for the soul and abounding over sin, all-sufficient in providence, and in your weakness, that the power of God may rest upon you, all-sufficient to endure unto the end. O

blessed is the man whom Thou choosest! And if He has, you will find these inward workings which will cause, compel, draw you to approach unto Him.

And then there are sanctified troubles and afflictions. You watch that, and that is why the Lord brings them. He brings His people into such extremities, to the very ends of the earth, and then He sends this message: "Look onto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Upon what authority? "For I am God, and there is none else." And you know it, there is none other to whom you can look when you are at the ends of the earth. Look for these things, my friends, in trouble, In surprises, when the Lord is pleased to give you the wine of astonishment, and show you hard things. You will find everything, without exception, in this blessed Word, as we were trying to speak last Lord's Day. There is not a condition, a trouble, a depth, that this Word does not come into. Has the Lord ever caused you to approach unto Him in trouble?

I look back to the time from 1927-37. There were ten years of conflict - to the same month, August 1927 to August 1957. But O I was caused, I was compelled, to approach unto Him. It won't be always in a chapel pew. It won't always be on your knees – blessed when it is! But O how I have pulled up at the side of the road and poured out my heart before God, and in the bitterness of my soul, and gone into the churchyards and cemeteries and found sweet consolation among the tombs, and had some sweet anticipation of eternal glory! He knows how to cause you to approach unto Him. Never mind about your religion for a moment. Has this much of the text a place in your experience? If it has, you will go to heaven – you must! If it has not, what shall I say? Well, we are brought very low at times, and I have asked the Lord if He would burn up everything in me but that which is of His Spirit. It is a very solemn thing to pray; but there is this about it, my friends: whether you pray it or not, nothing is of any use to us except the work of the Holy Ghost – nothing! The sooner it is burnt up, the better. But this was the point. You may fear that if He does that, you will have nothing left. Well, should it come to that, what would you say? I believe that you would pray this: "Lord, if there is nothing left, give me something; begin a work of grace in my heart." But if you did approach the Lord like that, under a sense of your utter dependence and helplessness, it proves that you are not destitute of faith in Him. You see the connection, and the blessedness that this man has in his election.

"Causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts." It includes the house of God, but not that merely. It is to be feared that many people come into the building that never come into His sanctuary. But here it is: "into Thy holy temple." And some of you know what it is to come into this chapel, and for the Lord to take you into one of His chambers, and give you a vineyard in the wilderness. That is to say, some special manifestation through the Gospel to your soul, some secret of the Lord. Have you ever felt as though you were the only person in the chapel, and lost sight of everybody else? Your soul case and experience so taken up that you have really dwelt in the goodness of Christ. He had taken special notice of your case. It may have been a case of trouble. You may have come into the chapel at your wits' end, staggering like a drunken man, and you may go out singing:

*Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given.*

Well, you have found the secret place of the most High. You know the difference; it is not every time. I know the time when I have sat in the chapel, and could willingly have gone from the chapel into eternity, wished I had never to go into the world again, in all its dust and earthliness and death, when Christ makes Himself precious to your soul.

"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee" – and boldly – "Come boldly to the throne of grace." It is as faith sees the great High Priest in heaven. And the duty and office of a priest is to offer a sacrifice; and wherever there is a sacrifice to offer, there is sin, and there needs to be an altar to offer that sacrifice upon. And the Lord Jesus is the Priest, and the Sacrifice, and the Altar, so that He has everything complete for a sinner to approach unto. And that will help a poor sinner to come boldly to a throne of grace. "Let us draw near In full assurance of faith." But you might say, "I could not approach in full assurance of faith." Well, it is not a full assurance of faith that all your sins are forgiven, and you are sure you are going to heaven; but it is this: Have you a full assurance of faith that the precious blood of Christ, if applied to you, would make you whiter than snow? That His glorious righteousness could cover you from every folly, every fault? Whether you will ever attain to it, you have got a full assurance of faith that there is a blessed Son of God exalted In heaven in all the efficacy of His Person, and the completeness of His finished work.

"We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thine house." I should think you would. So should I, if I could get at it, if it would get at me. Sometimes you can see it before you. O the goodness of the Lord's house! How great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men." Well, may the Lord exercise our souls to examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith. It is no good; nothing else is any good but whether we are in it.

Amen.