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La G 692

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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,  
on Sunday morning, 11th April 1965.

"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.

The things of God are exceedingly sacred. Very solemn. Even the most blessed of Scriptures have a blessed solemnity about them; and I feel in these days to be compelled to pause more than I ever did before, before the Word of God. There is something so searching, so discriminating as we have said, even in the most blessed scriptures, and I would commend this to you that we may as we read the Word of God, prayerfully pause over it.

You take for instance this text, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' There may have been times when we would read the chapter, read it reverently and soberly; but perhaps now there are questions asked in our hearts, in our consciences. It is a good thing to have an inward monitor. To have an inward faith, a living faith that asks questions; and as we read this text there may be a question asked 'Do I know this blessedness?' Have I any evidence to believe that I am this blessed man whom God has chosen and caused to approach unto Him?' The blessedness of this man you will see by the connexion with the chapter that we were reading. O that rich first chapter of the Ephesians. Look at the riches of it. To whom do they belong? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." But what is the rule of these blessings? "According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." That man then must necessarily be a blessed man. He was chosen of God e'er time began. And it would be well, though you may feel to be very short of it, to notice in that chapter to the Ephesians the richness of these spiritual blessings; Blessings which flow through the channel of sovereign election. Flow down through the predestination made known to His people in effectual calling.

'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest,' but to take another character. I feel warranted to say that the character in the first verse is one that joins in a declaration of this blessedness of the Lord's people, and I should believe that that character is in the Chapel. "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion." The margin says, "Praise is silent for Thee, O God, in Sion." There may be those, whose spiritual experience, although they may say they have no spiritual experience, but those who feel that their religion consists not so much in what they possess, but what they need and desire; and the tender fear of God in their hearts will not allow them to take what they feel does not belong unto them, but they wait. They wait and they know what they wait for. O I believe that praise will burst forth from those waiting souls, when the Lord visits them, gives them a token for good! But there are those who are waiting for the Lord. They may come up to His house from time to time, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour Thou barest to Thy people." They realise the nature of that favour, that grace which is in Christ Jesus, that immutable love of God in Christ from which nothing can separate. They realise that there are spiritual blessings which are different from temporal and providential favours, but they want them and they wait; "Praise waiteth for thee, O God in Sion."

Now have not some of you waiting souls, for a waiting soul is a seeking soul; have you not in your heart at times meditated upon the blessedness of the man whom God has chosen? You can say 'while I feel to lack that grace I see in others, while I hunger and thirst for the living God, yet I can say they are blessed people.' 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth.' Well then, a waiting, longing sinner can say this, but there is something to be said to that sinner; the Lord says it. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say, on the Lord." Iniquities prevail against me and that may be just what a waiting soul says. I do feel there is something very blessed about the opening of this Psalm and the character. "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion." "Iniquities prevail against me", and that may be one reason why there is not a breaking forth. O how you do need a manifestation to your heart of the forgiveness of your sins and until you receive the forgiveness of sin your praise cannot break forth. What you need is what we read in the 44th Isaiah, and you will see there how he that waited; praise that waited for the Lord did break forth. If the Lord should say to you "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins, return unto Me for I have redeemed thee" - what was the effect? "Sing! O heavens for the Lord hath done it." And as the Lord has done it, it is done. Nothing can be added to it, nothing taken from it. Now this is the breaking forth of one in whose heart praise waits for the Lord. "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away." There is hope in a waiting soul. There was in the case of David, even as he waited in the depths. "Lord, if Thou shoudest mark iniquity, who shall stand?" When you read such scriptures does it bring you to a pause? Have you been thankful for the confession, the acknowledgements of iniquity of those saints that have gone before? Knowing yours, as by the Holy Spirit, can you say, if the Lord should mark my iniquity, I could never stand. "But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." Reverential fear, that Thou mayest be worshipped, that Thou mayest be sought unto. Therefore, I wait for the Lord. O there is forgiveness with Him." I wait for Him and in His word do I hope." But O to be brought to this "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins. Sing O heavens, the Lord has done it!" Well, praise waiteth for Thee, O God in Sion, and unto Thee shall the vow be performed."

I really feel it is warrantable to say, that when praise really waits for the Lord, waits for His coming, there is in that poor sinner's heart a kind of vow. You may feel that you have never made a vow, but you examine your desire, if you have a real desire. You take the case of Ruth. She did not know that the nature of her expression of love was a vow. "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee." This was it - "Where thou lodgest lodge, thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion, and unto Thee shall the vow be performed." So that this waiting sinner views the blessedness of the man whom Thou chooseth.

Here we have the doctrine of election. "According as He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world." When man was created, he was created in perfect innocency and righteousness. God did not create sinners; He did not make man a sinner. Man's sin was his own action. But since man fell, and God knew that man would fall and made provision for it, although He owed man nothing, and when He created Adam and Eve and put them in that beautiful garden, He gave them a law. He prohibited the eating of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He warned them, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But O when the devil tempted them, he denied the Lord! He said, "Ye shall not surely die; God knows that when you take of that tree, the fruit of that tree, you will know both good and evil; you already know good, now it is a wonderful thing to know evil too, you will be

as gods; you will know both good and evil." But out of the mass of fallen mankind the eternal God chose a people for Himself, according to His foreknowledge. God is incomprehensible, His mind is infinite, but that infinite mind and His eternal prescience chose a people according to His sovereign will. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth.' And He gave that chosen people to His Son. "Thine they were, and Thou gayest them Me" said the Lord Jesus when He prayed for them. O blessed people for whom Christ prayed I if we are inside of the 17th John, we shall be in heaven. For the Lord Jesus prayed for the whole election of grace; sacred prayer! "Thine they were and Thou gayest them Me."

'Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth.' I don't wonder then that Peter said, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," and also there is this text, this proof of election - "Knowing brethren, your election of God, that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." Therefore, that is a scriptural text and it makes that a very important word. We are hearers of the Gospels and if you, by the Spirit, can trace out in your heart that you have received the Gospel, not merely in word only - there is no life in the word only, the Gospel can be known in word only by any intelligent natural man, but the things of the Spirit of God must be known by revelation of the Holy Ghost. We may know all about the Scriptures, we may know all about the scheme of salvation, but if we only know it in word it has no influence in us, it leaves us where it finds us, and therefore, if the word comes in power, it comes in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, and that is an evidence of election. Has the Gospel ever come to you in power? Do you feel by divine teaching your state in the ruins of the fall, your utter undone condition the completeness of your death in yourself, that you need divine power? Superficial religion and just the word of the Gospel is of no use to you. It is a mercy to have that evidence of the life of God in your soul and of living faith. If you have life and a living faith the Gospel will make contact with that life and that faith.

I will venture to repeat an illustration that I have sometimes made because of the importance of the point. If the word, if the Gospel of God comes to you in word only, it is similar to a camera with no sensitive plate or spool in it. The camera is complete, the light enters the aperture, but nothing is registered, nothing is received; and if you hear the Gospel in word only you are like that camera with no sensitive plate or spool in it. Same action, the same preaching to operate the camera in the same way; the light goes into it, there is nothing to receive it. But if you receive the word in power, in the Holy Ghost, you will have that sensitive plate, a divine arid living faith that will receive the impression of the Gospel with power in your heart and it will have this effect; "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of God." What a difference.

Now, as you are concerned about your eternal salvation, look honestly into your heart with all the thousands of sermons you have heard, have you any evidence of that internal faith that has received the impression of Christ in the Gospel and that has transformed you by the renewing of your mind? 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth.' Very blessed, very solemn; that other man can be a blessed man, let him be who he is or what he is? Let him attain unto the highest honour in this world, let him be in possession of great estates, how can a man be a blessed man if he has never chosen God? Do you believe it? Do you feel it?

'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest.' What was the cause of this choice? The sovereign love of God; nothing else. God's sovereign love is the effect of this choosing - for that is the secret of the Lord. Secret things belong unto God. None of us know whom God has chosen, but if He has chosen us we shall know it; and one effect will be this, we shall choose Him in return, and it brings us to effectual calling. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' This is a very import'nt expression here, 'CAUSEST to approach unto Thee.' You take that out and it loses its importance - "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and approaches unto Thee.' But, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' If it was not for this causing, none would ever approach unto Him. What is the secret here? The Lord Himself gives it in the 6th of John, "All" everyone of them "that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me and he that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." not for any reason whatever, cast out. O that tremendous declaration. Nothing can overthrow it. Nothing can frustrate the eternal purposes of God which are so blessedly expressed there.

We would say again, as you read the Word of God does it cause an enquiry in your heart? "All that the Father giveth Me shall come." Do you ever come in simplicity to the Lord and say, 'Lord, grant that 'shall come' may take effect in my poor soul. Like dear old Sukey Harley, when it was first revealed to her "Ye must be born again", it had an effect, in her simplicity she went before the Lord and prayed, "Lord born me again." O it is sweet to see and to feel the effects of this choice. The Apostle Paul to the Romans shows us how this follows; he says there, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." What a word that is connected with this choice; to be predestinated and to be conformed to the image of His Son. If you are chosen and predestinated this must take place, you will be conformed to the image of His Son. "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called." you must be called sooner or later, "And whom He called) them He also justified." O see this blessed chain, the links of divine sovereignty, the decrees and purposes of God taking effect in a poor sinner's heart "And whom He justified, them He also glorified." This is the way to heaven.

Blessed, 'blessed is the man whom Thou choosest,' and that man He will 'cause to approach unto Thee.' We would try as enabled to show how this blessed man is caused to approach unto God; everyone of them will be. Some born early in life, some later in life. The first thing in this calling is conviction of sin. We can never exaggerate the importance and the blessing of conviction. No man will ever approach unto God and seek salvation until he is taught by the Spirit his state and condition of a completely ruined sinner. Well the point is, have we? Normally, most people will confess that they are sinners, but to have the sentence of death in ourselves by the action of God's holy law is another thing. To be brought into the very experience of utter ruin in self so that you see the completeness of your undone condition, see also the justice of God's holy law; to be shut up, shut up by the law of God with no hope in self; to see your debts, and yourself a bankrupt. Isaiah, he learned this truth both ways. You will see the glory of God in His holy law, and you will see the end of all perfection in the flesh; but you will realise that His law is exceedingly broad; His holy law claims the whole of our being from head to foot, inside and outside. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." You will realise that the broadness and completeness of the holy law claims the whole person and will reject anything less than perfection. But this will be a preparation for the Gospel, and you may depend upon it that where this is lacking there will be a deficiency in experience. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to

repentance." It is a mercy to be made a sinner by the Holy Ghost. Not that the Holy Ghost makes sinners, but. He does convince them that they are.

'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' The law with respect to the Lord's people is made a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. The law is not thus made a schoolmaster to reprobates; no, it is a curse and its condemnation is absolute; but the condemnation of the law in the heart and conscience of the Lord's people is made a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. So that there is no way of escape by the law. It will bring them just where the apostle was brought, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If he had thus concluded this experience, he would have been in despair. If that should be the end of all that we have to preach, there would be no Gospel. But it was not, it was not the conclusion of the whole matter. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." What then? Why! then there will be an answer to the prayer we sing; "Convince us of our sin, then lead to Jesus 'blood." O what a view: Have you ever had it? Have you ever viewed the Lord Jesus in whom is an infinite fullness of everything that we are destitute of, everything that we must have. A fullness of salvation, a fullness of grace, of mercy, of redemption, a fullness of holiness; a fullness of divine merit, a fullness of wisdom and unsearchable riches - and a poor destitute self-condemned, law-condemned sinner, to have his eyes opened, not only to see the dismal state of his position but to look from the border of the pit to Christ's recovering grace! Why it is a sight that an unconvinced sinner never imagines. It is a mystery, you may not understand this remark but I do believe that there is nothing but a poor sinner, sinking in deep mire where there is no standing, as he is given a view of Christ the eternal rock - no other eyes but a poor sinner's eyes, a sinking sinner, beholding this eternal Saviour, the eyes of faith. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest,' this will cause you to approach, and you will say, "Other refuge have none." It will discover to you what this world is since the fall. The world is a different place since the Fall of man. In Eden there was nothing to harm. There were no wild beasts before the fall, nothing that could hurt. No thorns on the rose trees. O blessed Eden!

*But banished thence we fly to thee,  
O garden of Gethsemane.*

*(Gadsby's 153)*

Is that as blessed a place as Eden? Thrice more blessed' to see the dear Redeemer there!

'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' There will be given to that man by the Spirit, such an intense desire as well as a deep need of all that is revealed in Christ in the Gospel, it will cause him to approach. Has He ever done it to you? Has He done it both ways, by a deep sense of your need as you are exposed and pursued by conscience, wrath and law and revealed the City of Refuge? Has He ever caused you to approach by His sacred attractions? Caused you to approach by hearing His divine voice in the Gospel? Have you ever heard it? Do you ever trace Him in His blessed Word?

I have thought the 55th Isaiah to be a most sacred chapter. He causes the people to approach by his invitation reaching their case and their heart. He neither gives out promises nor invitations promiscuously. They come to cases, people that need them. "Ho! everyone that thirsteth," If you are a thirsty soul, you are a living soul, you cannot live without God. Be thankful if you cannot live

without Him. A knowledgeable professor, he can talk about Him, may write volumes about Him; never knows Him, never loves Him, never needs Him.

'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' He approached the throne of grace, pours out his heart before the Lord. Very sweet approach this is. Pours out his heart in confession of his sins. We need to be convinced of sin before we can confess them. "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper;" but O to bow before the throne of grace according to that word in the 62nd Psalm - "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him." It is a sweet relief. Do we ever do it? These questions are pointed, they are necessary. What kind of a profession and experience have we? You look at it - "And causest to approach unto Thee.' Is it in our experience? Are there days, are there circumstances, are there afflictions that are used to give new life to prayer? When you have no other helper, when you come with the woman, O she was caused, she was compelled to approach unto Him! "She came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me."

You will find this causing to approach unto Him all the days of your life and that may account for many mysterious dispensations and providences. It accounts for the method, the nature of the pathway of tribulation to the Kingdom. Therefore, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee.' Some of you may remember when you were first caused to approach unto the Lord. I can commend to you the reading of John Bunyan's call by grace; "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners." He could tell us how the Lord first caused him to approach unto God. I believe that in the main teaching will be of two things, the Lord will increasingly teach and show us what we are and increasingly show us who and what He is. You might think that if we are once convinced of sin and know what we are there is no necessity to know any more about that; well, you will find if you live long that you will have to learn that lesson over and over again. But the thing is this, that when the Holy Ghost teaches you who and what Christ is, the mercy is and the comfort is this, that He will show you that this blessed Son of God incarnate is greater than you are in every sense. O the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! His infinite merit swallows up all the demerit of a sinner, His precious blood can take out the deepest-dyed stains, and when you feel your need of it, it will cause you to approach unto Him.

Amen.

GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS