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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel,
Brighton, Sunday morning 25th September 1966

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will
make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine
only."

Psalm 71 v.16.

It is very evident that David composed this precious Psalm when he was an old man, but it is suitable for the young as well as for the old. The language of it is beautiful, experimental. I have lately admired the language of the Word of God. It is inimitable, there is nothing like it. You take the best language of a natural kind and it is not to be compared with the language of Holy Scripture, and perhaps especially that of the Psalms. Who could express what is discovered of the inward working of the soul without the influence of the Holy Ghost? The greatest natural Poet could not begin to express the language of the Word of God, but it is a mercy if it expresses our experience, it is indeed, if ever the Psalms have spoken for you, if ever the Psalms have been made your prayer book, there is some evidence that you are in the footsteps of the flock.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God". We read that "the preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is of the Lord" and if you ask Him to prepare you, you might be greatly surprised how He does prepare you. If we know the experience of this word and are brought to the resolution of faith to go in the strength of the Lord God, the preparation for it has been that we have been weakened, brought to the end of our own strength, our own wisdom, our own resources. That is the preparation. A man will never be brought to this "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" if he is strong in himself, there would be no need for the prayer.

I do not know whether it is wise to tell people about our own weakness, but I felt it impossible to come to the services today. You might say well, I should think you have been long enough preaching to have got over that. I have not. I did not think it was possible to come and when upon my knees this was the answer, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only." and if David was an old man you would have thought that he would have come to the end of his goings, that that would belong to the past, but we shall need it to the end.

I remember a young woman who was dying of cancer, as she was expiring, she was still conscious, a hymn was read to her, it was the 267th hymn; and as the 5th verse was read,

"Fear not brethren, joyful stand
On the borders of your land,
Jesus Christ your Father's Son
Bids you undismayed go on,"

and in her faint voice she repeated it twice -

"Bids you undismayed go on".

So from the beginning, young people in their goings forth in life's journey, right down to the very end. If we are living a life of faith, in our movements this will be the attitude of the soul. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God.

We must look at some of those that did so and commence at the beginning. You take for instance when the children of Israel were being brought out of Egypt, they were brought to the Red Sea, they were brought to an impossible position. They were pursued by the enemy and it would appear that Moses was dismayed for he fell upon his

face, but the Lord said unto Moses, "Why criest thou unto Me ? speak to the people that they go forward". But it appeared impossible, mighty enemies that could have completely destroyed them and the sea before them. "Speak to the people that they go forward", and the Lord said that to Moses before He said, "and lift up thy staff that is in thy hand", and you will have to trace the goings of the Lord's ancient people that they had to thus commence the wilderness journey with this text; "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only".

Take for instance Gideon. By the way, I would say this, that this resolution of faith is in the face of impossibilities, difficulties, dangers, fears, it needs no strength to go according to our own fancies and this is the language of faith. The worlding goes to his own pleasures, seeks his own wealth and honour in his own strength, and if we attempt to at all it is a poor affair, for it will all decay, it is all perishable. But this is a going forward in the strength of the Lord unto those things that are eternal.

Gideon. You know the history of Gideon, how he trembled as he was hiding a little corn and the Lord said unto him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour", and you really could not see much valour in Gideon, trembling under that oak tree. But the Lord spoke strength and valour into him. But Gideon, he confessed his weakness. I do feel that it is worth turning to that case of Gideon. The point we are on is this, "I will go", not to things that are easy, not to things that are sweet to the carnal mind, but in the face of enemies, difficulties. "The Lord said unto Gideon, the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. He said unto Him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us, and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt, but now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us unto the hands of the Midianites". Not much valour about that, he was brought to weakness. But this is a wonderful thing, "The Lord looked upon him and said, go in this thy might", what might ? he had just confessed his weakness, "Go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel, and he said, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel ?" Where was his might ? He constantly confessed his weakness, his fear. "Behold my family is poor in Manasseh and I am the least in my fathers house", but the Lord said go, "Go in this thy might, have not I sent thee ?" that was his might, he was sent of God.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God,, I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only". So that this is his resolution of faith based upon the strength of God in Christ. He commences the Psalm with that, "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion". Now this is the way in which pilgrims will have to live, because when one is called by grace, then they will know from that moment the conflict begins. The whole world is in opposition to the kingdom of grace in the heart, and it will take in all the movements of the soul together with movements in providence, and what a mercy it is. How good it would be to see the Lord beginning with our young people, so that everything that confronts them they approach their matters, their difficulties, movements, changes in life, with this faith. "I will go". O when we are ready to halt, I have known it, known it today, when I would have willingly laid down the burden of the ministry, it is not easy, would gladly have laid it down if I could have been allowed a seat in the back of the chapel. But when the Lord shines into the heart and gives a word of instruction, then one is willing to do His will. "I will go". Looking at self I felt like Gideon, got nothing to go with, no strength no wisdom, no might, but the text answered every objection, and it answered objection in two ways, namely - "I will go in the strength of the Lord God", because I have none of myself, but then look at yourself, look at your unrighteousness, the depravity of your nature, your life of sin, sin stained. Even if I have strength to go, I am not worthy to go, not fit to go. But the two things are answered: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of

thy righteousness, even of Thine only", and that is the only way that we can approach any matter according to the will of God, and I do trust that even the text itself might be made an encouragement to those who have to move forward in any matter of difficulty, who may fear.

"Let not thy heart despond and say
How shall I stand the trying day ?
He hath declared by firm decree
That as thy days, thy strength shall be".

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God". What we need is for the Holy Ghost to reveal that strength. It is the strength of God in Christ. It is not the strength of an absolute God, that would consume us, and therefore the Lord Jesus is called, "The Man of God's right hand, the Son of Man Whom He hath made strong for Himself. I have laid help upon One that is mighty", and that help that is laid upon One that is mighty is laid there for weak people. Therefore the Lord is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is made everything to His people that they can possibly need. When faith sees it, it ventures. Seeing the sufficiency that there is in Christ, because the fulness of the Godhead is in Him bodily. It sees the sufficient strength to bring us through and faith ventures, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God". So that it is faith in God. Faith in the first place in Jehovah. You must have a strength that is different from, greater than human strength. The greatest man in the nation cannot help you with respect to the inward mystery of Godliness and the mystery of Godliness runs through the whole of the Christians life, a peculiar people. They have a peculiar life, they have a peculiar pathway, they have peculiar troubles, they pray peculiar prayers, they sing peculiar hymns. But the Scriptures describe this peculiar people, and they live in a peculiar way and that is, by faith. Live upon things that are eternal and unseen, their strength lies there.

"I will go in the strength" of Jehovah, "of the Lord God", because He is the most High, "And he that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High shall abide under the shadow", under the protection, "of the Almighty". Now you will feel this. If you did not by the Spirit believe in the infinite Being of an omnipotent and immutable God, you would have no strength at all. I could not go on the strength of the greatest man living, and there is a distinct influence upon the heart of a poor sinner when he gets, by the Spirit, some apprehension of the infinite God in Jesus Christ, to see that mighty power and divine sovereignty in a Man, the Son of Man, so that He can be approached, so that in Him we can receive that which is beyond nature. "I will go in the strength of" Jehovah. This strength of Jehovah is revealed in the Gospel. It is first of all spiritual strength needed for the soul.

I know there will be goings by faith in providence, but the first thing is the goings forth of the soul. Now they may be some of you who fear God, who look at your unworthiness, your wickedness, and feel if you ventured to follow the Lord and make an open profession of His name, you fear that you have no strength to carry it on, you fear,

"Lest in some hour of sore temptation
You might fall, and yielding to the
Tempters power, faithless might prove,
And give up all".

You are looking at yourself, at your unworthiness and at your sins. Well, it is a good thing to see them and if you are weakened by them none but the Lord can strengthen you and raise you from the dust and lift you from the dunghill of your nature, but if faith is strengthened to behold God in Christ, looking at Him, and

"Pour not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower"

looking at Him will enable you to join with David, "I will go, I will go in the strength of the Lord God". O this faith honours Him, venturing faith honours Him. I will go in the strength of Jehovah, and this strength too, is in the Gospel. As we said at the beginning, the preparation for it is being brought into weakness in self. To be brought to the end of self confidence.

Now I want to make this plain because of our young people. In things natural you need a natural self-confidence, there is no need to destroy that. With respect to the things of this life you need natural intelligence, you need to be trained in those things suitable for your calling. But when it comes to things of eternity, the things of the soul, it is entirely different. Natural strength has no place there. "Let not the rich man glory in his riches, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom", it does not say that a rich man should not have riches, it does not say that a mighty man should not have strength, it does not say that a wise man should be a fool with respect to things natural, but that wisdom cannot penetrate the things of God, that strength is of no use against the enemies - "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers", the powers of the darkness of this world, and therefore we need a different might, a different armour.

You take for instance again, David, when he went against Goliath. Saul looked at him as a stripling, almost with disdain. David said, "Let no man's heart fail because of the Phillistines, I will go". It is as though Saul said, well, how are you going my boy, you had better put my armour on. He put on Saul's armour but he could not go with it. He went in the strength of the Lord God to face that enemy, and these things will be interpreted in our experience from time to time, and make the word of God a living word in our souls and a daily companion and consolation in the midst of tribulation, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God".

Just for a moment, before we come to the righteousness, which is the Gospel, we would make some application of this going forth in the providences of God. I think perhaps the 107th Psalm is the most precious Psalm for it does display the goodness and grace of God in guiding His people the right way, though a rough way, to the city of habitation. And what kind of people were they? "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in", and each in our measure and in our manner, will come to the same condition. The Lord knows what we each have before us, sometimes in looking back, we say this in remembering dispensations, things that we came to pass through, that we could never pass through it again. Sometimes we look forward to things that we have to face and know not how to proceed. Well, there is no condition but what the Word of God will meet it. You take this text, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God", and then hear the voice of the Lord supporting you in that venturing, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for Me?" if there is don't go. If there is anything too hard for the Lord, don't venture. But when faith sees this mighty God in all His sovereignty, and omnipotence, mercy joined with power, then whatever is before one, faith will say, "I will go". "I will go", in the strength of the Lord God, make mention of His righteousness, even of His only". That is the answer to the weakness and to the fears, that is the answer to you filthy rags and to your unworthiness. "I will make mention of Thy righteousness even of Thine only".

Well, if there should be some poor, fearful soul, and the Lord knows what your pathway is, and that is a blessing, and that will help you to say, "I will go" for the Lord knows. It was a strength to Job. "He knoweth the way that I take", therefore I will go in His strength, and it does not matter what it is. That has been such a comfort that one who puts his trust in the Lord, then His trust in the Lord is unconditional. It does not matter what condition, or place, or difficulty, it does not matter what belly of hell you may be in, what deep dungeon, God is above all. Many of our friends have had to face

things in their afflictions, have had hospital before them, operations before them. I know the world have, but the pathway of the Lord's people is a peculiar pathway although it may be the same affliction naturally. O what a blessed manner of approaching suffering is the text, maybe to enter hospital, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God". I was with a dear man who had to make up his mind within an hour whether he would go to the hospital and his daughter said unto him, rather his sister said unto him, would you rather die at home or go to the hospital. He said I would rather die at home but what is the will of God, I would do the will of God, therefore I will go to the hospital. He went to the hospital and died. O my friends we shall need this blessed faith in every path on the way to heaven, and I would that it might be made a blessing to our young people. We cannot expect you to have the experience of David, he was an old man, but you will. I do not know whether you ^{will} remember anything that I have said, it is feeble enough I know, but it may even be that in some future matter, difficulty, trouble, something that causes fear from which you shrink, you might remember that I have said, or rather this text says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God". It is a movement, I will go. Faith says, "I will go, I will go", and it will be so to the end of our life. I have been much impressed by that verse of a hymn to which we referred, and the response of faith, "Bids you undismayed go on". It comes down to your lowest condition, the most sore affliction. It will enable you to face the worst enemy. Mica says, "Rejoice not against me O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me", strong his consolation was in God.

Well, it is either this, or we live by sense, by our carnal reason. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only", and before you are able thus to venture you will have been taught what Jeremiah was taught, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away". Now that is a preparation. O for the want of this knowledge and preparation there is a good deal of presumptuous religion, superficial religion and you will increasingly need something solid. Rather have a little that a righteous man hath than the riches of many wicked, that is a preparation for this part of the text. "I will make mention of Thy righteousness". I cannot tell you how that did help me a little this morning. You see there are the two things, utter weakness, no strength, no ability, no wisdom, nothing to say, a blank darkness, but "I will go in the strength of the Lord God", then it was my unworthiness, a recollection of a sin stained life, a feeling of a corrupt nature, second part of the text answered that, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only". So that this is the preparation for the second part of the text. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away". It is no preparation to read that, to read it will not prepare us, but have you been brought to it in your experience? "There is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee, for Thou hast hid Thy face from us, Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities", that is preparation. O what a mercy to be taught of the Spirit, and the teaching will be constantly two ways. For we shall never be better in ourselves. Our nature will never be altered, but if we are born again we shall have two natures, there will be the old man and the new man, and the new man can only live by bread from heaven, the bread and water of eternal life, the Gospel of the grace of God.

"I will make mention of Thy righteousness". The righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The righteousness of Christ really embraces the whole of the Gospel. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, it is the power of God unto salvation, and therein is revealed the righteousness of Christ from faith to faith", so that the whole of the Gospel is this righteousness, and I will make mention of it. Because it is a righteousness wrought out, not for Himself, It is a righteousness wrought out, not for the righteous, but it is

for sinners. It is for those who are undone, and the whole testimony of those that are taught of the Spirit is this, "Woe is me for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts". So that we can plead the righteousness of the Lord Jesus which is His finished work. We have broken the law, we can never keep it. Our inability to keep the law is not an innocent inability, it is our sin, but O the Substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ ! He makes His righteousness available, unto those for whom He came - "Not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance". O it is a relief to plead the righteousness of the Lord Jesus as you bow before Him as a sinner, as a leper, as possessed of devils, as you fall before Him in all your sense of universal death, covered with shame and confusion of face, and yet by faith to look to Him, and see Him to be the perfection of beauty, to behold His glory, "The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of truth and grace", and to plead His righteousness, what He is, what He has done, what He is now doing in heaven.

"I will go" says faith when it gets a sight of the glorious Redeemer. He who came forth to conquer, to destroy the works of the devil. He Who rendered entire satisfaction to the demands of the law of God, Who obeyed it, magnified it, made it honourable. I will mention His righteousness, even His only. Not a part of mine and a part of His, we have got none, and so it is a mercy to be reduced to worse than nothing in ourselves and for the Lord Jesus to become all in all to us. We could not go on without Him, and yet there is sometimes such a blessedness when the Holy Spirit does open before a poor troubled sinner the glorious kingdom of God's grace, the Gospel makes it like the very land of the living. Ah, and sometimes faith, when it views this blessed, good land, will look beyond and get a glimpse of the King in His beauty,

"In the midst of tribulation,
Oft we cast a wistful eye
To our future habitation
And by faith the shore espy".

It is the only way we can go through life and it is the only way that we can meet death. A wonderful thing when we come to die and have it immediately before us and be able even then to say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God", and "Into Thy hands I commit my Spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of hosts".

Amen

Transcribed verbatim and not
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