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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel,
Brighton, Sunday morning 4th September 1966.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire:
and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and
over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of
his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of
God".

Revelation 15 v.2.

When Paul was taken up to the third heaven he heard words that were not possible to be spoken, so that we do not know what words he heard. But this Revelation that was given unto John was to be written, as was testified in the first chapter. "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass, and He sent and signified it by His Angel unto His servant John, who bear record of that word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ and all things that he saw"; and what a revelation it is ! It is a mystery, all revelation is a mystery and therefore we need it to be revealed to us to rightly understand it and to enter into it, and we feel our need of that revelation.

John says he saw another sign in heaven, and therefore we have the record of this word that John was beholding by revelations the things that are in heaven. "Great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues which in them is sealed up the wrath of God", but he saw also a sea of glass mingled with fire and them that had gotten the victory over the beast.

Well, you might say, you have ventured upon something exceedingly difficult and high. I know it. I feel insufficient for it. You might say, why did you venture then ? Well, the thing was this, all I had this morning, yesterday afternoon, was O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me, what has that got to do with this text ? "Them that have gotten the victory", a little consideration which brought to mind that word in the 12th chapter of Hebrews. "Seeing then we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight ...and run with patience the race that is set before us, locking unto Jesus". John was given to see the end, the victory, the winners of this race. He said on one occasion, "I count all things but dung that I might win Christ and be found in Him".

"I saw as it were a sea of glass". May the Lord preserve us from any speculation or fanciful interpretation, things are too solemn, but we have in the 21st chapter concerning this sea of glass, the building, that is of the New Jerusalem, the building of the wall of it was of Jasper, the city was pure gold like unto clear glass, it was a sea of glass. The question, or the exclamation was and is on behalf of all who get the victory in heaven. "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes and whence came they ? these are they that came out of great tribulation", a sea not of glass, a sea of temptations, tribulations, conflicts, calamities, warfares; but here is a sea, not a boisterous sea, but a sea of glass, placid, transparent, and I feel that Samuel Rutherford interprets this rightly -

"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand".

Therefore this sea of glass as I view it, is the merits of Christ, His finished work, the complete finish of His work, the Gospel of His grace. John saw this sea of glass mingled with fire. There will be the blessed, glorious Trinity in heaven. John said to his disciples whom he had baptised; "I baptise you with water and there cometh one that will baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire", and they know something of the work of the Holy Ghost. We sing in that hymn -

"I asked them whence their victory came
They with united breath
Ascribed their victory to the Lamb,
Their conquest to His death".

His zeal inspired their breasts, also the fire of the everlasting love of God. This is eternal glory. The sea of the glory of Christ seen without a veil between; "Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face".

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire and them that had gotten the victory". Well, I do need grace to speak rightly. The victory is the victory that Christ gained, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". But there is also an experimental victory, the victory of faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". The victory of faith under the power of the Holy Ghost in all the experience of the sins of this life, but the two together are very blessed. The latter works from the former. "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast". But this, in the first place, is Christ's victory. He came, and the purpose of His coming was to destroy the works of the Devil, and you see Him coming forth as we have it in the prophecy of Isaiah. "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozra, this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?" This is the victor, here He is engaged with the world, the flesh and the devil, and hell. "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel and thy garments like Him that treadeth the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me, for I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiment". This is the glorious conqueror going forth to conquer, and He sent forth judgement unto victory all the way along the pathway.

The law entered into the work of Christ. The law, if I might so speak reverently, scrutinised both His Person and His work. The Lord Jesus condescended to be His Father's Servant and He had a work given Him to do, and He condescended also to occupy offices on behalf of His people and enter into relationships with them and assumed characters most gracious. But the law entered into it all, and had the Lord Jesus been any other than He is, I do not say than He was, than He is, the law would not have accepted Him, would not have accepted Him as a Substitute. So that He entered, entered into the work that His Father gave Him to do, entered into this warfare. Girded Himself with strength, went forth as a strong man to run a race, and everything that He did in His work He sent it forth unto victory. Something very blessed in that to my mind, because all that He did His people did in Him. When He suffered, when He suffered temptations, when those temptations were complete, they were sent forth and they were sent forth unto victory, because He was tempted in all points like as His people are.

When He suffered, suffered the reproaches and ignominy, He sent forth His sufferings unto victory, there was victory in them. They accomplished their purpose. When He kept the law, went to the end of it for righteousness, it was sent forth unto victory, and in His sufferings in the garden of Gethsamane, His agonies there under the desertion of His Father, when He tasted death for every man, when He drank hell dry, as He took that cup from His Divine Father's hand, He sent forth those sufferings unto victory. He drank hell dry for His people and sent forth such a victory as that He obtained heaven.

John saw these saved people standing upon a sea of glass, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast. Death is swallowed up in victory. Who swallowed it up? the Lord Jesus. How could He swallow it up? because there was more life in Him than there is death. That which swallows up must be greater than the thing swallowed, and that is a mercy. It would be a comfort to some poor sinner who really is brought down to nothingness. It is surprising how low one can get; "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me". Isaiah got the victory. Job who said, "O that I knew where I might find Him", Jeremiah who was in a low dungeon and was reduced to breathing, he was

there. "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire and them that had gotten the victory". That is a most blessed chapter, 15th 1 Corinthians, shows us what that victory is: "O death where is thy sting? O grace where is thy victory? the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" And what is the affect? "Therefore brethren," seeing this is Christ's victory, He gained it, "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord". So that was used as an encouragement to continue to be steadfast, to abound in the work of the Lord. Not only did the Lord conquer but it is true what we sing -

"He that conquered for us once,
Will in us conquer too".

Now this inward victory is not a different victory but it is experimental, and the warfare begins from conversion. When one is born again, from that moment the conflict begins, and this is one thing that John saw, and I feel it is connected with that word to which we have referred: "Seeing then that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses", traced their going, their pathway. So these runners, and some of them in the midst of their running according to the 107th Psalm, looked as though they would never get to the end. O to see some of these witnesses in the midst of the conflicts, in the midst of the race, in the midst of the battle, you would think that the whole thing was hopeless - and with respect to yourself also, you might have thought,

"Mine appeared an hopeless case,
Such it had been, but for grace".

John saw these, poor things that they were; what a sight, what a blessed sight John had of heaven and those that had got there. yet -

"Of that mighty multitude
Who of life were winners,
This, we safely may conclude,
all were wretched sinners".

What a mercy that is. I have not the ability to speak of these things, but sometimes I can see them, feel them, taste them. It is an amazing thing. In the mystery of godliness, in the mystery of the covenant of grace, in the mystery of the purposes of God, that He should display His greatest glory in dealing with the most vile thing, sin. That the unspeakable, holiness, purity, glory, majesty of God, is exercised in sin - the removal of it, the redemption of sinners: and there is a display of the majesty of Jehovah, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Ghost to a saved person who is the subject of this salvation. But what a life! what a life. Therefore says Paul to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life". So this too is the victory that John saw these who stood upon the sea of glass had obtained, them that had gotten the victory over the beast. That is, the devil. The devil got the victory over man in the first instance. That was a mystery, why God permitted it we cannot say. It is a question not to be asked or answered, He did permit it. Sin has entered, not only into the world, but every convinced sinner will say, I know it has entered, it has entered into me. The beast got the victory, O his subtlety to go to those two beautiful innocent creatures. They knew not they were naked. O the sweet, beautiful purity and innocence that man was created in! and the devil said to them - you only know one part, you know what good is, but if you take of that tree, you will know both, you will know good and evil too, you will be like Gods, and so he does today. He insinuated into their mind a doubt with respect to God Himself, "Hath

God said?", "Hath God said ye shall surely die, ye shall not surely die", you will live and you will know more than you do now, you only know what it is to be good, you will know what evil is.

O but look at this, "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast". What an amazing salvation this is, and this is only because Christ Himself got the victory over the devil. It makes His Person to be very precious and glorious. He is greater than the devil, and you will feel it a comfort, poor trembling sinner, to realise that there is One greater than the devil, and One greater than yourself. I should have sunk in endless despair if it was not for this. There is one thing that a poor sinner who feels himself insignificant, who sees himself to be a very great monster, that is, in his sinnership, and who knows something of the power of the devil, but, to see Him, Who is greater than both. To see that glorious One, coming forth to destroy the works of the devil, becoming the way, the way from sin to grace, the way from hell to heaven.

"Them that had gotten the victory over the beast". Some of you know what it is for the beast to have gotten the victory over you. With what vital and yet simple language the Bible does here and there elucidate these truths. For instance, in the Romans, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound". I have noticed in the epistle to the Romans how many times that is there spoken, "How much more", and there is salvation in that. When your unbelief and the devil shows you yourself and your sins, and they are true enough, but if the blessed Spirit should drop into your troubled heart those two words, "Much more", much more, it would bring something of Christ's victory into your soul.

So that there is a race to run and there is a warfare to fight. A good warfare. But we have no strength to fight, and we have no strength to run the race, but it is suitable, "The last shall be first, the lame shall take the prey". The terms of the Gospel suit me well.

"And them that had gotten the victory over the beast". I know you will realise that you still have a body of sin and death, you will know the power of Satan as long as you live. When Paul said, "O wretched man that I am", it was after he was converted and called by grace. In my view, the apostle Paul in his dying day would have no better opinion of himself than he then expressed. "O wretched man that I am", and in a dying day he would thank God for Jesus Christ.

Victory. "Saw them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image", who were born in his image. At least, the Word of God says we are born in sin and shapen in iniquity. What a shape, iniquity, what a conformity, born in it. But John saw them that had gotten the victory over the beast and his image. "As we have born the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly". And what is the victory over the image, not that we were born in, why, to be born again. Another image then. It is the only way we shall ever get the victory over the image of the beast in which we were born, to be born again, to have another beginning. To be a new creature, created in Christ Jesus, and John saw these that had got that victory over the image of the beast.

I can but refer to that chapter again in the Corinthians. (My memory is not what it was), "...As we have born the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" and when one is born again and bears the image of the heavenly, then the new creature has a new ~~vision~~, a new image gets a new ~~vision~~, and as that which is earthy lives upon earthly joys, follows after that which is earthy, sensual, devilish, so those that get the victory over the image of the devil have another ~~vision~~ created, a new objective, new desires, new affections, a new heart. What a sight John had to see these!

in whom such a work of grace had been completed. To see them get the final victory and stand upon this sea of glass; they shall enter into this peace. Peace perfect peace.

"A sea of transparent glass, clear as crystal". The merits of Christ, the glory of the Gospel accomplished, finished salvation. What else do you expect to stand upon in heaven? "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image and over his mark".

There is another kind of mark, blessed mark. You will remember that there were those commissioned to go forth and to put a mark upon all that sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. A mercy my friends if we ~~also~~ have any marks of the Lord Jesus upon us. Sometimes they are called spots. The spots of His children, that is evidences, evidences of the work of faith, the fruits of faith. But here it is the mark of the devil. O his mark. I think it is the preceding chapter of the one before where it speaks of those who will not be able to buy or sell except they have the mark of the beast in their hands. What a solemn thing it is, to increase riches and have the mark of the beast in your hands. They shall lie down in sorrow. O I have wondered sometimes, especially in these days of commercial corruption and every other kind of corruption and depravity, the mark of the beast is upon everything, almost upon every advertisement that you see. But what a solemn thing to lie upon a dying bed having made out the will and a good deal of what you possess to be the mark of the beast. It is a good thing to call to mind our latter end, to consider it. Not only when we get there, but from a distance, and to consider what will be my latter end according to as I am now living. Some people seem to think that they will make amends at the last, but "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that he shall also reap". We are sowing every day. Every thought is a seed, the thought of foolishness is sin, it is a seed and it will spring up. What are we to do with it? What harvest do we expect? What can I expect when I look back at my past life, every act and thought is a seed sown. Well, we need a Substitute. All the perfections of Christ if we have a Substitute, His precious blood, His sinless, holy sacred life will be our refuge, and so He will blot out our sins as a thick cloud, and unless we have that substitution, then everything - thought, action, everything that we have done in our lives will be seeds and it will be a terrible harvest.

But these, they got the victory over his image and over his mark." The fear of God. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. We have to look at the Scriptures to get a right interpretation of the Word of God and I feel safe to keep near to the Scriptures, but we are talking now about getting the victory over the mark by the fear of God. Well, David says this, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? now this is it, this is the people that get a victory over his mark; "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." (Psalm 15) And John saw them, he saw them standing upon the sea of glass, who got the victory over the mark of the devil as well as over his image.

"That had gotten the victory over the beast and all his mark", and over the number of his name". When the Lord went over to that poor mad Gadarene who was possessed of devils, He asked his name, and he said, it is Legion, for we are many, and the number of the devils name is Legion. You look down the street, or down Queens Road, or anywhere in these large towns, full of the devils palaces, and see the number of his name. So that as you look back at this great company you see them walking by

faith and not by sight. You see them enduring as seeing Him Who is invisible. But look at the struggle. "They that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved". But look what there is to endure. You will not be saved because you endure, you will not be saved because of your faith, but you will be saved because of the object of faith.

"And over his mark and over the number of his name". But it is encouraging to follow those who have gone before, especially when they are in a low place. It appears at times as though our survival really depends upon our faith and our struggling, but it is a secret deeper than that. But in our experience we sink so low at times, sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and if you follow one of those that have got to heaven and see the places that look to be hopeless, it is a wonder that a single one ever survives the wilderness, but everyone will, every one will, because Christ has got the victory and because the Government is upon His shoulders, and because He has the key, He opens and none can shut.

You would wonder that Jacob ever got through, or Joseph. Why the pathway of Joseph seemed to contradict every promise, his life at one time was a life of contradictions. But his faith stood in the power of God and it prevailed.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark, and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps". The harps of God. Sighing and tears had vanished away. What must it be to be there! They had done with the conflicts and they now stood upon the merits of Christ having the harps of God, and singing, they sing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb. Two songs, one is a song of deliverance. O I do believe it will be a song of praise to God for His deliverance! and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are Thy works Lord God almighty, just and true are Thy ways, O King of Saints. Worship, O sacred worship, day and night in His temple.

Well, may the Lord make us overcomers, "He that overcometh will I give to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication)