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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel, Brighton,  
Sunday morning 30th January 1966.

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;  
These things saith he that is holy, he that is true,  
he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man  
shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth:  
I know thy works, behold I have set before thee an open  
door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little  
strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my  
name."

Revelations 3, v. 7 & 8.

This Book is what its title says it is, Revelations, but it  
is also a prophetic revelation, and doubtless it describes the  
different dispensations through which the New Testament church  
passes to the end of time. It may well be that the church is now  
in a Laodicean condition, dispensation, but at the same time it is  
true that all these seven conditions may be in the church at one  
period. There may be some churches in a state of Sardis, another  
in a condition of Laodicea, another in the condition of Smyrna. It  
may be true of a congregation. Some of you here may be in a  
condition of the church at Sardis, thou hast a name that thou livest  
and art dead; very solemn. That church was not completely dead or  
the Lord would have nothing to do with it.

Or there may be some in the condition spiritually of Laodicea.  
Some may be indifferent, neither hot nor cold, luke-warm. Others  
may be in the condition of the church at Ephesus, they had left  
their first love, and indeed we may come nearer than that, the whole  
of the different conditions of these seven churches may be in one  
individual. O the changes that come over the soul;

"If today He deigns to bless us  
With a sense of pardoned sin,  
Perhaps tomorrow He'll distress us  
Make us feel the plague within"

I believe those of you who know conflict of soul will realise  
that even in your own case you experience the conditions revealed  
to these seven churches. "Therefore, he that hath an ear, let him hear  
what the Spirit saith unto the churches".

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write". The  
Philadelphian church was in a good condition, it appears that the  
Lord has nothing to find fault with in them, but in approaching these  
churches the Lord assumes just that character suitable to the state  
in which He sees the several churches. "These things saith He that  
is holy, He that is true". O if we had but faith and grace to  
trace the excellencies of God's eternal Son incarnate, Emmanuel,  
God with us. "He that is holy". Intrinsically holy, holy in His  
Being, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty", and He is called the  
holy One of Israel; and that is a mercy, because if we are of Israel,  
that is an Israelite indeed, then He is our holy One, and all our  
holiness will be derived from Him.

"He that is holy, He that is true", that is, faithful. He who  
is the truth. He who is the truth because He is the fulfilment of  
every prophecy. He is the truth because all the promises are yea  
and amen in Him. He is the truth because He is the anti-type of every  
type. He is the truth because He has accomplished perfect salvation,  
wrought out an everlasting righteousness. "These things saith He that  
is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David". The house  
of David is the election of grace, the church of God, the invincible

church; and He has the key of David. It is the key of knowledge, the key of divine sovereignty. Are you glad? It means the same as "The government is upon His shoulder". In Zechariah's day the people rejoiced to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, they rejoiced to see it in His hand, in the hand of the Lord, for except the Lord build the city, they labour in vain that build it. O you will be thankful, those of you who have been brought to see your deep need of all that Christ is and all that He has done and all that He is now doing. You are brought to see that in Him you live and move and have your being, naturally as do all men, but spiritually; you will be thankful that the whole dominion, the government, the sovereignty, the key is in His hand and the government upon His shoulder, very solemn if it were otherwise. How sad it is to be left with delusion, what a terrible thing it is to be left in error, to have a religion where the sovereignty is upon a poor creature. Naturally, we should be independent of God, and therefore, it is a mercy when the Holy Spirit teaches us what we are without Him. All false religion would have sovereignty upon the creature and want the key themselves; "Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him?" But have you been thankful that the whole of the responsibility of your salvation is laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ? and that key was given unto Him in the covenant of grace? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". All the fulness of life, of power, of merit, holiness, righteousness, sanctification, and this invested Him with authority and sovereignty. As God He could never be invested with anything, He could be given nothing, but as a Mediator He condescended to be made man, the Father's servant. "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth". Behold Him, the glorious Lord, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, the express image of His person and the brightness of His glory, condescended to be His Father's servant, and He placed this key upon the shoulder of His servant; and what has been an amazing thing to me is this, that being His Father's servant He sent Him to be the servant of the church.

O may the Holy Ghost give to us words of soberness and truth. Think of it sinner, that the glorious One, in love, condescended to be His Father's servant and to be your servant too; and see how He carried out this key of authority in all that He did. For whom did He come? For whom did He, though rich, become poor? not for Himself. Why did He suffer? Why was He tempted of the devil in all points like as we are? not for Himself. Why was He made under the law, made of a woman, that He might become a curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come to His unworthy people? He had the key and therefore, in His coming He did not destroy anything except the works of the devil. But He opened. "I am come, not to destroy the law". A destroyed law would bring no glory to God nor any salvation to sinners, not a bit. "I came not to destroy...but to fulfil".

He had a key. In every step from the manger to the cross He had this authority, this knowledge, this knowledge of God. O to have the Spirit's witness of our interest in Him and His interest in us! "His delights were with the sons of men", a marvellous thing. "He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth" and He alone can open, we shall prove this. It is a part of divine teaching; and the first opening of this divine authority is the opening of the heart. "He openeth and no man shutteth". It was the Lord that opened the heart of Lydia, not Paul. The Lord, through the preaching of the Gospel. We shall learn this, that He abne openeth when we are brought to realise that without Him we can do nothing, and find everything is locked up. The law will teach us this, the law will teach us that everything is locked up and we shall be locked up under the law, brought in guilty before God; have no hope in ourselves and the sentence of death throughout the whole of our

being universally, we shall be locked up. It is a mercy to be taught that. Have you known what it is to be locked up and can find no exit, no way of escape, under the condemnation of the law? It is for the want of this teaching that there is so much light and frivolous religion about, the Lord killeth as well as maketh alive. The law takes sinners to prison, casts them into prison until they can pay the uttermost farthing, they are locked up in bankruptcy, locked up in death and darkness.

"He hath the key of David, He openeth". O blessed opening. We have it in type really in the gaoler. There was Paul and Silas in the prison and they sang the Lord's song at midnight. Needs faith to sing at midnight in a prison. But in answer to their prayers there was an earthquake, and they were brought out of the prison, and this earthquake shook the gaoler, not only shook the body but shook his soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Then there was an open door, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved", He has the key, and He is the door.

The apostle Paul tells us how this key opened his prison door. He was under that divine teaching that brought him to realise that all he was in himself was a wretched man, a wretched sinner. What a sight! What teaching! and there is no respecter of persons. I am persuaded of this, that the richest man in this country if he was convinced of sin and called by grace, he would be among the poor; "Blessed are the poor in spirit". You would see that millionaire, if he was called by grace, if you could see him in secret kneeling before the Lord and saying, I am poor and needy. You would see the wisest scientist in the world, if he was called by grace, confess that he is a fool with respect to the things of God; it is a different wisdom. And the Lord Jesus has the key, He opens the heart, He brings the prisoner out of prison, gives liberty to the captives.

"These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth". Another thing that this key opens is the Word of God. It is a sealed Book until it is opened by this key of knowledge. Of course, men understand it naturally but the light that is in them is complete darkness. I doubt if there was ever a time when the religious leaders of our national church displayed such atheism and darkness as in this present day. Mere education is not sufficient, it is good, I would never despise education, but if it is alone it will lead one who possesses it away from God, and if such a one is religious their religion is mere religious logic, the word of God is sealed until this key opens it.

This opening was manifested to those two walking to Emaus, "He began at Moses and all the Prophets and expounded all the scriptures", all the things concerning Himself. He began at Moses, He began at the 3rd chapter of Genesis, 15th verse, that is the first thing concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in that promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head", and we need the same blessed Spirit that inspired the Word of God to interpret the truth and to apply the truth so that faith becomes the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. He hath the key of David, He openeth the Scriptures. You can bring to bear a human intelligence upon the Scriptures and you become darker and darker the longer you pursue that method; but when the true light shines and the Lord opens the Scriptures by the Spirit, then the life and power of the truth will be applied into your souls and at the same time He will open your understanding. It is only this work of the Spirit and this key of knowledge that can bring us into a saving knowledge of the truth, and some of you feel that. I believe some have been left to try and open the meaning of the Scriptures by ordinary intelligence and reason, they can never do it. The thing is, Has this key ever opened the Scriptures to our understanding? if so, then we shall realise what Jeremiah means when he said, "Thy word was found, and I did eat it", and "Thy word

was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." When this key opens the Scriptures it gives us to see what it contains, the treasures that it contains, so that the Word of God accomplishes in your experience just what it says, and you will be brought into a condition to need the truth it declares. You take for instance that very gracious promise to troubled people, "Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness". Has that ever been opened to you? If it has you have been brought into a state to need that upholding, to need that help, to need that divine consolation. But what a key, what a treasure that is opened to a distressed and troubled sinner.

"He hath the key of David, He openeth and no man shutteth". And so with respect to providence. Providence and grace in the case of His people, go hand in hand, and therefore, the same paths of providence in a natural man are made different in a spiritual man. "He openeth and no man shutteth"; and if you trace, "remember all the way the Lord thy God has led thee these forty years in the wilderness," if you have been led by the Holy Spirit you will trace many openings, and they will run together. I believe that the Lord never opens to His people a pathway which leads away from Him and the provision that He has made in the Gospel. He opens and no man can shut. It is true <sup>He</sup> may shut up many an opening that appears to us, and we do need an interpreter. You may have something set before you which appears to be to your advantage, that will satisfy some ambition, and you may commence to pursue that path and that ambition, but the Lord may just shut it up so that you cannot perform your enterprise, but if you belong to Him you will live to prove that His wisdom is in it, "Too wise to err...too good to be unkind", and where He shuts up like that, He will open. O it is a good thing to observe these things and understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. We shall see light in His light even with respect to our movements. Naturally, we merely see light in a natural light and therefore, follow our own inclinations and our own will and our own advantage. But where the Lord shuts up a pathway you might hear another word behind you as He opens another way, "This is the way, walk ye in it". This is very confirming. True, it may require this, "If any man come after Me, let Him deny Himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me".

"He hath the key of David, He openeth and no man shutteth". And O, as we pursue the pathway through life, some of us have got life for the most part behind us, but I think of the young people; O what a mercy if they are taught to know this great God and His Son Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, and are given to live a life of prayer, to go to Him who has the key upon His shoulder, upon whose shoulder is the government and responsibility of all things, whose sovereignty orders and controls the whole universe. What a mercy it is when young people are brought to know Him by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and to proceed through life in a way of prayers, seeking unto Him that has the key. Because you may depend upon it there will be many locked doors in providence, many impassable mountains beset with impossibilities and difficulties, but what a mercy to know this glorious Lord and to go to Him in all our difficulties in childlike, sweet, simple faith and say, Lord, Thou hast the key, I need a door opened, wilt Thou open one? None will shut it if He opens it. And in another place in the Revelation, we read that He has the key of death and of hell, that is solemn for the wicked, very blessed for His people. He has the key of death and of hell, and therefore, those of whom we read, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, he that is holy, let him be holy still, as a tree falls, so it shall lie", and the wicked are turned into hell and they are locked there. But He has also the key to heaven, He opens the door to heaven for His people. He did not force anything. There is something to my mind very sacred, as you view by faith this glorious one from the very manger with this key upon His shoulder, for

"His shoulders held up heaven and earth  
When Mary held up Him".

Everything He did, every thought He thought, every blessed act, all His sufferings, there was this key of sovereignty in it. and He was unlocking doors for His people to heaven. He prepared a place for them, He prepared the way to the place and He prepares His people for it. He has the key,.

"And unto the church at Philadelphia write, these things aith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth". O what a rest it is ! If we have by the Spirit a sense of security in the hand and under the eye of this glorious Lord, it will help us to pray. "The key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works". This is declared of every church and it belongs to every church today, it belongs to every minister, it belongs to every member of the church.

"I know thy works". Well, I am thankful He does. It is a trembling consideration when I realise my own case, when I look back at my sin-stained life; "I know thy works". I would not have it otherwise, because if He is your Saviour and He knows your works, your sins, your life, He knows what you need of His precious blood and of His saving sanctifying grace to abound over your sin. He knows that you need salvation. The intimate knowledge that the Lord has, not only of all men generally, but of His people particularly, His knowledge of them is a knowledge of love, it is a foreknowledge. That beautiful 139th Psalm has been a comfort, it is a Psalm in which I have both trembled and rejoiced. How intimate is His knowledge; "He knoweth my downsitting and my uprising, my thoughts afar off, there is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. God is not deceived, God is not mocked". No, and a poor convinced sinner would not attempt to mock Him, no, he would come before Him and although He knows it, yet this sinner would confess "In my loins is a loathsome disease, my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness, my sins because of my burden are too heavy for me". The Lord knows it. "I know thy works".

But there is another thing He knows too, He knows His own work in your heart. He knows the works of faith. Does He see that conflict between the flesh and the Spirit ? Between the power of grace and sin ? Does He see too, His own works in your heart ? O if we are in Christ we are new creatures ! "What will ye see in the Schulamite as it were the company of two armies". That new creature, that new man cannot sin, it is sinless. It is the kingdom of grace in the soul and He knows that. He not only knows that body of sin and death that is a burden, but He knows too the work of faith. "I know thy works". Well, I am thankful that God is Who and what He is, and to behold Him in Christ so as that faith under the power of the Spirit goes forth out of self, out of sin, out of the horrible pit, unto Him who is that hope set before us in the Gospel.

Amen.