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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Lord's day evg., Aug. 14th, 1960 1013

Text: Rev. iii. 7, 8.

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

We attempted to make a few remarks upon the 7th verse this morning, but living tongues are dumb at best. The Lord here, as we remarked this morning, manifests Himself to each of these churches according to their several conditions, and oh how we do trace the dignity and majesty of His Person, and the sovereignty and freeness of His grace, and the immutability of His love! Oh it is that glorious Person who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, that is set before us here, as He from whom alone we can receive spiritual blessings and divine favours, which are altogether different in their nature from anything beneath the sun. And I do believe there are those here who, though perhaps not in word, yet in a sense of their very need would pray with the church: "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence". Take this blessed Person out of these Revelations, there would be nothing to reveal. It would be like blotting the sun out of the firmament, and

"Could we but with clearer eyes,
His excellences trace;
Could we His Person learn to prize,
We more should prize His grace".

But we concluded this morning by speaking of this "key of David", and it is upon His shoulder. Men naturally prefer to have a key in their own hands, would rather that the government of themselves and their lives were upon their own shoulders. I remember the time when it was so with me. Indeed, I thought it was so, that I was my own, could go where I liked. My time was my own, my lips were my own, my life was my own. I wonder if there are any young people that wish that the management and direction of their lives was with themselves. Well, if you do, I wish for you that the day might come when the Lord will stand right across your path and hold up His hand and say unto you, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify ye the Lord in your body and in your spirit, which are His". The worst thing that could happen to a person is to be his own, to have the responsibility of his own life and his own death.

"But 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."
We mentioned how that the first thing that this key opens is the heart, although this work at the same time opens the eyes of the understanding. Oh it is a mercy if we, by the Spirit's light, can trace this beginning to our religion and see that it was this key, this divine sovereign authority of Christ, that opened our eyes and opened our hearts! I cannot open your eyes or open your hearts. It was not Paul that opened the heart of Lydia. It was the Lord that opened her heart. And some of you may feel that. Of what use would it be if I could by persuasion open your heart and persuade your will? You will feel this, and want the work of the blessed Spirit wrought in your soul.

"None but Jesus; none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good".

Then there is the opening of the Scriptures. These two walking on the way to Emmaus, the Lord joined with them: "Then opened He their understanding, and opened unto them the Scriptures, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He spake unto them the things concerning Himself". Now these things are written that we might press toward the same knowledge. Whatever experience is recorded in the Scriptures of those that have gone before is attainable by His people in every dispensation. Oh my friends, may we aim high! You will be compelled to aim high, if you are very low, if you feel by the Spirit's teaching that you lie wrecked in the ruins of the Fall. And I do believe the lower we sink, the higher we shall look. And so David prayed: "O Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law!" Very solemn, when the Word of God is sealed! Our hymn (19) was speaking concerning the 5th chapter of this Book, for there was none found worthy to open the Book and loose the seven seals thereof: "No man was able to open the book, neither to look thereon, and I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and loose the seven seals thereof". And that One is the Lord Jesus, the King who is sat upon the throne, the holy hill of Zion, and who prevailed to open the book and to declare the decrees of Jehovah in the covenant of grace. And the Lord Jesus has declared all the purposes and counsels of God concerning His people and His kingdom, and they are recorded so far as we need to know them in the Scriptures. And He who prevailed to open those seals can and will, by His Spirit, reveal the secret things of God to those that fear Him, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant".

But we would speak a few more things concerning this opening. When a door is opened to a poor sinner into the kingdom of God's grace. It is first of all, a secret opening to faith in the heart. This work takes place upon everyone of the election of grace. The invisible church embraces the whole election of grace, but the visible church is a divine institution. A church state was ordained of God. Its Head is the Lord Jesus Christ. The members of His mystical body are those contained in the visible church which are in the invisible. There are some in the invisible church of God who never join the visible church, and there are some in the visible church that are never, and never will be, in the invisible church. But a church state is a divine ordination. And it is therein that the work of the Holy Spirit is made manifest, for the openings of His providence concur. And this may perhaps gather up some of you in your experience. "He that openeth and no man shutteth." When the Lord opens a sinner's heart and opens his eyes, and there is an inward response of faith to the Gospel, there is as it were a letting in of the true light from the Lord Jesus, which reveals the things concerning His kingdom, and when these things are seen by faith, the sight brings the things seen into the soul as a possession.

I have sometimes used the illustration, and I feel warranted to do it. The Lord Jesus used illustrations, and this I have felt to be a very solemn one. I speak now of that inward secret opening before there is anything of a public nature, and that is compared with a camera. When light enters through the aperture of a camera upon the sensitive plate within, it takes the image presented to it. But if you take the same camera with no sensitive plate in it at all and go through the same process, nothing is registered. I am speaking of this opening and letting in of divine light, which brings in the Person, the benefits of Christ into the soul. Now with all your hearings and examining yourselves, what do you feel about your case? Do you feel you represent that camera with no internal sensitive plate, so that when the glory of Christ in the Gospel is opened unto you, there is no inward response? Or is there that in your heart which receives Him?

Well, this is the key, the authority, the divine sovereignty of Christ exercised by His Spirit in illuminating the understanding, and it had such an effect upon the pilgrims that immediately they fought a fight of afflictions. They never fought before because they saw nothing to fight for and nothing to fight against. Oh when the Lord comes in His heavenly authority and unlocks the heart and reveals the mystery of the Gospel to a poor sinner, what a sight it is! I think on Friday we were speaking of Joshua. Moses said to him, "Thou must divide unto the people this good land: "Moses, My servant, is dead; arise therefore". There has been made by God a very important and blessed connection between the preaching of the Gospel and the salvation of His people; but the key is in the hands of the Lord: "He that openeth and no man shutteth".

Once that light has shined into the understanding, it is an anointing. It is a teaching, illuminating light. Nothing can put it out. Nothing can shut that heart which the Lord has opened. No, because it is a living opening; it lets in living light. "He that openeth and no man shutteth." It is indeed a mercy to be thus led first of all into the kingdom of God's grace. And this will be silently, secretly going on in a poor sinner's heart. Then all things become new. The Bible becomes a new Book. It begins to speak in the conscience and heart. It becomes a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. It has authority in the soul. The preaching becomes new. I remember many years ago, and I knew the young man who went to Mr. Popham and said to him, "You have altered in your preaching, Mr. Popham". He said, "It is not I that have changed; it is you". Oh for the divine authority of Christ to come in His sovereignty and open our blind eyes and our hard hearts, to open this blessed revelation of His purposes, of His grace, of His salvation! Nothing will ever close it: "He that openeth and no man shutteth".

This will go on until the love of Christ so constrains a poor sinner under a sense of His love, the sweetness of His mercy, the power of His grace, as to remove every hindrance and every obstacle. Some of you may feel that it is impossible for you ever to enter in through the door and into the sheepfold. But the Master of the supper sent His servants out into the highways and hedges to compel them to come in. And of the objections that those humbled sinners

make! I believe there are many who make objections and excuses, even here. Not the same excuses as those who would not come to the feast, who had bought five yoke of oxen or married wives and so on. No, but the objection would be, "I am unworthy". But I believe the Lord has an answer, as recorded in the last chapter of the Gospel of John, for every such hindrance and objection; but only He can speak it. And that is, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me". Ah, some of you may be standing before that door and long for it to be opened unto you. You may consider those that have made shipwreck of faith and be hindered, and say, "That will be my case, I shall never endure unto the end". And you may look at some of those who have made a profession and who are really a stumbling-block to you. But in each case the Lord would say, "Now what is that to thee? Follow thou Me". Weakness is no barrier; He has omnipotent strength. Ignorance is no barrier, for it makes room for His wisdom. A sense of raggedness and nakedness is no hindrance, for as with the prodigal, He brings forth the best robe. And therefore He exercises this divine and sovereign authority and opens the door into the church, and no man shutteth it. They may attempt to do so, but none can. True, there are the institutions of the ordinances in the church of God very clearly written in the Word, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. And oh my friends, to feel in your heart the love of Christ, to see Him and have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, for the blessed Spirit to pour in upon your heart a real sense that all that He became and suffered, He became and suffered and accomplished for you! To give you some assurance that He is your great High Priest and offered Himself for you, that He was your Substitute, and that you have such union with Him that all that He is and has is yours. It will make you willing. The Lord says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". And He instituted baptism, very simple and yet very profound in its significance. The grave of Christ, His sufferings, His overwhelmings are set before us in that ordinance, and also His glorious resurrection. As though He would say to a sinner, "Now if ye love Me, this is the way; walk ye in it". "He that openeth and no man shutteth." But how solemn is it on the other hand - "who shutteth and no man openeth". Upon this point, you remember there were the wise and foolish virgins, and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. No use standing without and saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us". The door was shut, and none could open.

Well, we read just now that He has also the keys of death and hell. Very solemn for the wicked; very blessed for His dear people! When He shuts the gates of hell, then the gates of hell can never prevail against His people or His church. "Upon this Rock have I built My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And that declaration as much belongs to, and will be fulfilled in the behalf of everyone of His poor people. Oh the security of the church!

"How happy is that little flock,
Who safe beneath their guardian Rock,
In all commotions rest!"

"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." We have to say this too, that the Lord Jesus carried this key upon His blessed shoulder as He went forth a Conqueror and to conquer. Why, this key has in it the merit and the power of His Person and His work, the virtue of His redeeming blood, of His justifying righteousness, and therefore it will open heaven to His people, will this key. He entered heaven with His own precious blood, that is to say, His infinite merit and the infinite satisfaction that He rendered in fulfilling the law of God. He opened heaven; He has the key, and it is a key of knowledge. Oh my friends, the Saviour knew for whom He died and gave His life a sacrifice! There will not be one missing. He presents the church unto Himself without spot or wrinkle, and with holy language declares; "Behold I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me". And so this divine authority of Christ will open for His dear people right through their life, doors in providence and in grace, providence made subservient to His purposes of salvation and grace. And what a mercy if you can see that, that all your providences, though you were led about in the wilderness and instructed, tried, and proved, and tested, though you went through deep waters and bitter trials, cutting sorrows, yet the purposes of God were such that He had thoughts of peace toward you, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Then He says, "I know thy works", and some of the works He mentions. One was this - "Thou hast kept the word of My patience". And the word of His patience really is the Gospel itself. It may be too the promises of the Gospel. The Lord will try His people. You see how He tried Joseph: "The word of the Lord tried him". We need patience that, after we have done the will of God, we may obtain the promises. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience." In the Romans we read of Him as the God of patience and of consolation. Oh how eminent was the Lord Jesus in patience, longsuffering, tender mercies, and loving-kindnesses! And we need patience to walk the pilgrim's pathway. Some of you may need patience in a very special way in the particular circumstances you are in. Now you may feel at times that you have come to the end of your faith, your strength, and your patience. But what a mercy it is to have the patience of faith to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and to recruit your strength by some fresh manifestation of Christ to your soul, some fresh communication of His grace. We need to have life renewed, if indeed we have life.

"I know thy works, behold I have set before thee an open door." This may well more principally refer to the angel, and to the entrance of a man into the ministry. And this is a very important door. We referred to Paul when he said, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, but there are many adversaries". And there will be, but only the Lord Himself can open the door into the ministry. It is very solemn for a man to force a door. Anything forced in the way of religion will end wrong. We need this key all the way through the wilderness in our different changes in providence, that those changes in the hand of God may become the handmaid of grace in our souls, and bring us at last to the city of habitation.

"I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The work of the ministry is a separate call from the call by grace. I believe there are many private christians that have a deeper experience than perhaps a minister may have. But what is necessary is to have a definite anointing. The Lord Jesus is the Head of the church, and He was anointed to preach the Gospel, and the very same anointing with which He was anointed flows down to the beard, that is to the ministers, and through those to the skirts of His garments. It flows down from heaven through the ministry right through the congregation and reaches the least member of His mystical body. But if there is not this open door and the anointing of the Spirit, there will be no unction, no authority in the preaching. It may be correct, it may be informative; but there will be no unction, no power, no savour, no communication by the Spirit of the things spoken. Very solemn! It is a difficult point for me to speak about. If I had to speak on this point yesterday afternoon and evening, I don't know what I should have done. Oh how many times I have been brought to an extremity and felt I could never face another service! But the Lord has until now very mercifully set before me an open door and answered that prayer of David, "Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise". Those special communications by the Spirit in unfolding the Word of God are an anointing. It is not a question of working out a speech or a sermon. I could not do it if I tried. But oh how sacred it is when the Holy Spirit's anointing is felt upon the heart and the good land is set before us, and as it were we lead the people into it as into a wealthy place, and the Lord blesses the provision of His house. His word is made like a hammer to break the rocky hearts in pieces, and like a fire to melt the metal and separate the dross from the gold.

"I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." There were two men that were determined to run, you remember, Cush and Ahimaaz. The first was sent and delivered the message, but when the other got to David, all he could say was, "I saw a tumult"; but he was a good man, and David advised him to stand by and be still. Oh my friends, to enter upon so trembling, so dreadful, so solemn a work without an open door set before us is exceedingly solemn beyond description.

"For thou hast a little strength." You will feel that you have got none at all. This applies to all His people: "Thou hast a little strength". Strength enough sometimes just to sigh or to groan, or an upward glancing of your eye - a little strength. And you feel at times that you have come to the end of it. But the mystery of this little strength is this, it is in God, and however little it is it has omnipotence in it. Oh the Lord can make a little go a long way, and therefore they go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God. Yes, He goes with them in His presence. No door is too hard for Him but what He can unlock it; no question too hard but He can answer it; no enemy too mighty but He can subdue it. "Thou hast a little strength."

A little strength to pray, a little faith. The Lord honours little faith. It is not the quantity, my friends, it is the quality.

If it is the Lord's strength, it will be made perfect, though a little. If it is little faith, He will honour it. A little faith will not let Him go. "Thou hast a little strength and hast kept My word and not denied My name." I have been glad of that. I remember on one occasion going out from the pulpit with shame covering me that I could well have hid my head from everybody, when the Lord did most mercifully bring this word into my heart: "Thou has a little strength and hast not denied My name". I was thankful for that. Perhaps some of you here have not got much more than that, a little strength and hast kept My word, not cast it away. And there are many ways that His people keep His word. It was one thing that the good hearer did. He heard the word and kept it in his heart. It remained there and operated within like a living seed and germinated. And you keep the word when you plead His promise, when you come to Him according to His word with conviction of sin. Oh a great thing to walk in the truth, and for our footsteps to be ordered by His word!

"And hast not denied My name." Very solemn to deny the name of the Lord! I would not if I could help it. Oh my friends, those of you who fear His name and yet feel many hindrances, don't honour your unbelief, don't honour your unworthiness, don't deny His great name, but "venture on Him, venture wholly, let no other trust intrude". He has the key. Oh ask Him to open every door, and may we lay up for the day of our death a good foundation, that at last He may open a door to heaven.
