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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Sunday Evening
27th October 1963.

"What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us, who can be against us?"
Romans 84:31

This blessed and weighty chapter, as you know, begins with no condemnation, and ends with no separation. They must indeed, of a necessity, be a blessed people who are enshrined within this chapter, of whom it is true: "There is now no condemnation." And that NOW, present tense, was never future, it was never past. It is a covenant now, before the earth was: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." There will be no separation, nothing will separate them from the Lord Jesus; and the whole security is in the blessed Being of the Infinite God.

This morning we attempted to say a few things about this glorious salvation, but the particular emphasis of the text is that it is a pause; and I do feel personally, and as a people, maybe as a denomination, that we need to pause.

I remember a good many years ago when I first began to read a volume of John Owen. I appreciated the truth; I seemed to have sought the truth, and assimilated the truth into my very soul, but I was brought to a standstill. Now this is what I mean by the text being a kind of pause. I felt afraid lest I appreciated the rich truth that Owen was able to expound, and that in reading I should go far beyond my experience and live upon John Owen.

Well, traditionally, most of us have been brought up in the truth, and we know it, know all about it; all about election and particular redemption; but the text brings us to pause and ask ourselves the question in the text: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" I feel that it is a very salutary exercise to look at the whole of what we profess in the gospel, and consider what real place it has in our experience, and what effect the truth has in our life.

We concluded this morning by speaking of the Lord Jesus. We mentioned His coming, how voluntarily He condescended to come. "How willing was Jesus to die". But although He came voluntarily, yet there is a blessed way in which it was compulsory. Compulsion cannot be brought to bear upon almighty God; but in the covenant of grace the Lord Jesus undertook voluntarily to redeem the Church, and He came. Lo, glad He came as a strong Man to run a race.

But He became His Father's servant. He had a work to accomplish; and having laid Himself voluntarily in the covenant of grace to save the Church, the government was to be upon His shoulders, the key of the house of David upon His shoulder, to become a Surety, a Substitute. There was – and I would speak it with reverence – a compulsion upon Him to carry out the work of redemption. And He speaks of this: "I came, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me; that of all whom He hath given me I should lose nothing." The whole responsibility of the salvation of the Church, and the responsibility of the safe arrival in heaven of those who are His, is upon the Lord Jesus. All help also is laid upon Him, that One who is mighty. But in order to do this, it was necessary for Him to become Man.

It would indeed be blasphemous to speak of any necessity with respect to God, who can know no necessity, but as a Mediator condescended to be made of a woman, to be made under the law, to take flesh and blood the same as His brethren, His children, and become a real Man, a God-Man, take a human nature into union with His divine Person. O what a mystery is here! Only so could He be a substitute; only so could His people be united to Him in an indissoluble union, an eternal union. And – what shall we then say to these things that are made possible by the wisdom, grace, sovereign will and love of God flowing through the channel of His dear Son that it might reach human nature?

My friends, these things are in the Gospel. O the glory of Christ in the Gospel! We would mention too, His great office as High Priest. The love of God is manifested in the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus, because upon Calvary He offered the great sacrifice, which puts and end to all the Levitical sacrifices - offered Himself without spot unto God. And what we need is for the Holy Spirit to unite us to Christ in our souls upon every point and every doctrine of the gospel, so that thereby you may know that Christ is yours and you are His. For the union is so real because of His substitution, because of His humanity, because of divine love and what love has provided, because of divine goodness and what that goodness has wrought out and laid up. So real, that all that He is and has is theirs. Do you believe it? "What shall we then say to these things?" The whole of the love of God in Christ, and all the work that He accomplished in fulfilling the law, in condemning sin by His own precious death, and in offering Himself a sacrifice, one sacrifice. It needed only one which derived its eternity and its eternal virtue and validity from His Person, and that Person becoming a Substitute. All the life that He lived, His people live in Him; and all their sins from the cradle to the grave were laid upon Him, and upon the cross He bears them away. "Who Himself bear our sins in His own body on the tree." He has the power. What emphasis is upon His person – "Who Himself, bear our sins in His own body on the tree." What shall we then say to that, with respect to our own experience, our own salvation? Does it help us to pray? Why, it will help the worst of sinners to come unto the Lord Jesus –

"When they survey that wondrous cross,
On which the prince of Glory died." (Gadsby's 439)

His death was the death of deaths. It was a voluntary death; He was immortal; He could not die of necessity; He could die voluntarily, and His death was a real death. His people were in union with Him from the manger, in union with Him in every step of His journey to the cross, in union with Him when He died, in union with Him in the grave. He was laid in the grave – a sweet consolation to a dying sinner. There is no place that His people have to go into, into which Christ has not been before them as their glorious Forerunner.

"What shall we then say to these things?" "Why," says faith, "if that God is for me, not the devil, nor hell, nor sin, nor self, can be against me, for He is greater than all." Sweet it is to look out of a sin-wrecked, wretched, ruined self to One that is greater, to look out of a ruin which is so complete that nothing can be added to it, to a completeness which is greater, a completeness of righteousness, of holiness. "What shall we then say to these things?" Do you love them? Has the Holy Spirit given them a form in your understanding? Do you see Christ in them? They try and paint pictures of Christ – terrible they are – but some of you have a very sacred image of Christ in your understanding. "But we shall all, with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord ...changed into the same

image from glory to glory." Indeed this comes in predestination. His people are predestinated to be conformed to His image. Now in all the work of grace in your hearts, together with a faith's view of the glory of Christ in the gospel, has He not a form? Would you know Him? Bad as I am, I believe I should know Him. Would you know another Christ if another Christ was brought into this pulpit? Would you say, "That is not my Christ!" O, it is blessed to know Him!

"What shall we then say to these things?" There is a resurrection. "He could not be holden of death." He saw no corruption; holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners He was, without spot, wrinkle or any such thing; and such a glorious One came down into the cesspool of the iniquity of us all, and when He died, the iniquity of the land of Israel was removed in one day. Resurrection! There was no part of the work of Christ 'that was but naked omnipotence; although omniscience is in it all, there was not the exercise of omnipotence. He had the law to fulfil by His life, His obedience, His righteousness, and therefore His resurrection was not an act of omnipotence only. He was justified in the Spirit when He rose. Had He not risen from the dead it would have proved Him not to be what He said He was. He rose from the dead because the work that His Father gave Him to do was finished and satisfactory and complete. He rose from the dead because He was sinless, and having fulfilled the law He could not be held of death. He died because sin was imputed to Him; He rose again because He had condemned sin in the flesh. He had destroyed sin, therefore He rose victorious.

Well, the power of Christ's resurrection is exercised by the Holy Ghost in the quickening of every dead sinner; and the resurrection of Christ is exercised in the reviving and restoration of every backslider, and the power of Christ's resurrection will be exercised in the resurrection day.

O, what blessed and strong language Paul uses to the Corinthians! "If the dead rise not, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain." Why, and "we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not." O, what a consolation to poor dying mortals who are in union with the Lord Jesus! How certain is resurrection into life!

"What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us, who can be against us?" But with respect to the chapter itself, we would just notice, as the apostle entered into it – because that word "therefore" in the first verse refers to the preceding chapter, and Paul there tells us of the solemn action of the law in condemnation. And it is well to remember that that 7th chapter to the Romans was written about twenty years after Paul was called by grace; yet he says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And neither Paul nor any other will ever be anything better than a wretched man all their life. A body of sin and death is never restored, never converted. Some of you will know this. Have you got beyond it? Have you got to the position that: "Once I said, O, wretched man that I am, but I have got over that now; I have got beyond that in my experience." If you have, then you as yet have no evidence of the work of the Holy Ghost. My friends, I believe we shall have to confess to our dying day: O wretched man that I am!"

But Paul did not conclude the chapter there. If that was all, then all would fall to the ground, and we should be in despair. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord... There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Now in

our experience, in a more or less degree, we shall understand this conflict of Paul's in the 7th chapter; and if we come into religion any other way we shall find that we have been deceived. In these two chapters Paul tells us how he was made a sinner, and how he was made a saint; and if we are to give an answer to those that ask us the reason of the hope that is in us, we should be able to tell how the Lord by His Spirit in the law made us sinners, and how He made us saints. The first thing He speaks of in the chapter is union to Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And the chapter we read (1 Corinthians 1 & 2) tells us how that comes to pass. Speaking of Christ it says: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom." And my friends, if we are in Christ Jesus, then God is for us. God was for us in eternity, in His everlasting love and sovereign will. God is for us in the covenant of grace; but there is a very solemn line of discrimination running through this chapter: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That is the secret of the Lord. That is a secret in the hearts of His people. But there is to be an open evidence, and the open evidence of being in Christ is not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

O what a clear distinction is made between the flesh and the Spirit in this chapter! And there will be as clear a distinction and separation in our souls. What shall we then say to that discrimination? Has that separation been made in our hearts? Do we give evidence that we are in Christ Jesus by walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh, for "they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." If we are carnally-minded we shall mind the things of the flesh, the things of the world, the things of the earth; but if we are in Christ Jesus we shall go after the things of the Spirit.

A beautiful experience runs through the Psalm: "My soul followeth hard after thee. O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee; that I may see Thy power and Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." And the apostle, knowing the terrible power of the law in his members, yet he comes to the gospel and shows us how he was liberated: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." How was that? Why, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is a greater authority than the law of sin and death in our members.

O, you will be thankful, especially when you know something of the mighty power of sin, its kingdom in the flesh! Then he further explains this: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh..." The weakness of the law is very terrible, because it really is its strength. I mean this. The law is not weak in itself; the law is a reflection of the justice and holiness and perfection of God, and it will not admit anything less than perfection; it will not accept anything but a full payment. But where the law is weak is because it makes demands of bankrupts that cannot pay. The weakness is in the bankrupt; not in the creditor, but in the debtor. If we only had the law of Moses we should be imprisoned to all eternity. "But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God sending His own Son did. O the love that fills His heart! O, the work of the Lord Jesus! It was not only perfection, but it was complete. It left not a vestige to be done. Therefore, says Paul – and O that it might be repeated by the Spirit in our hearts! – "Ye are complete in Him." Blessed people of whom that is true!

"What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us, who can be against us?" But the immediate context is very blessed; it contains the quintessence of salvation: "For whom He did

foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His dear Son." This is surely the blessed source from whence the river of the waters of life flows. Ezekiel saw it, he traced it, he was led into it, first to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the loins and found it an ocean that could not be passed over. But what is to be noticed in that beautiful vision of Ezekiel was this – several times this is mentioned – the waters issued from under the threshold of the house, that it was because of the divine source that gave to those waters the divine properties and virtues of conveying life wherever they came. And this is the flowing of the river: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called." Why, my friends, this is Jacob's ladder to heaven. Here we have the secret places of the stairs. "O my dove, that art in the cleft of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." That is spoken by the Lord of life and glory concerning poor sinners under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Why, if a poor sinner who is in the secret place of the Most High, for the Lord to see his countenance, bowing at his footstool, his face besmirched with tears and confession and desire, why, He says: "thy voice is sweet, thy countenance is comely." He is in the secret places of the stairs, and here they are. "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them he also called." It is the same THEM gathered here in the covenant of grace, the same people, to the last individual, shall and must be born again, and will be gathered together in the assemblies of the saints and brought to Zion, though it be with weeping and with supplication; and exactly the same individuals to the very last will be gathered individually into eternal glory.

"What shall we then say to these things?" If God in His everlasting love, in His predestinating decrees, in His effectual calling by His Holy Spirit, in His justifying righteousness, is ours, who can be against us? And upon that ground there are these challenges with which this chapter concludes. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called." O, to be called by grace! I say again, these works of the Holy Ghost in the soul are not an act of omnipotence only. "He led them about and instructed them." Remember the text: "What shall we then say" to being called; what shall we say about it? Do you remember the time when the Lord called you, when He delivered you from the power of darkness into His marvellous light? Translated you from the kingdom of Satan unto the kingdom of His dear Son? Do you remember when you were first brought to feel your danger and to seek a refuge, a shelter? Do you remember when, although brought up in religion and under the truth, you were first brought into a concern about your soul and eternity? And do you remember when first the gospel was opened to your amazing view, when you looked for hell, and the gospel pointed to heaven and showed you the way? Do you remember when there was first a shaking among your bones, those dry bones, when you heard a noise which made you tremble, and then a coming together bone to his bone, uniting you here a little and there a little unto Christ in the blessed gospel? Do you remember those secret places where you were unknown and your heart went up to the Lord: "Remember me with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people, Lord." It must be the same favour, I need the same salvation. Some of these simple exercises and childish thoughts are dear to memory.

Perhaps it is' not wise to speak of our foolishness, yet it may be for one particular thing I remember as I was feeling after if haply I might find the Lord, and went to His house with anticipation, I used to sit in the congregation and look at different people I really believed possessed the grace of God in

their hearts; and I thought if grace was infectious I would sit close to them to catch it. Do you remember those days? Calling; and calling is a consequence of predestination. "Whom He calls, them He also justifies; and whom He justifies, them He also glorifies."

"What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us who can be against us?" And is this the whole? No, no! "What shall we then say to these things?" Peter tells us. He says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy bath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." See the flowing of the river; see it proceeding from the eternal Jehovah to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God."

There is heaven to come; the best is to come. What shall we then say to this inheritance? It may be that some of you, sitting under the blessed sound of the gospel, have so been gathered up by the Spirit into Christ in all His fullness, His divine beauty, His saving grace, His glorious righteousness, His immutable love; and to feel that unity with Him and fellowship with His dear people and love flowing from heart to heart, that you have said this, concerning the inheritance:

"If such the sweetness of the streams,
What must the fountain be?
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from Thee." (Gadsby's 472)

"What shall we then say to these things?" The whole of the things of God? The whole of His dominion? The whole of the kingdom of His grace here, and of the kingdom of glory hereafter? A great thing, if by the Spirit we are able to join with the Psalmist: "This God is our God for ever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death." And if you can say that by the Spirit, the Lord has said this of you: "This people." They said: "This God" – and this God says: "This people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth my praise."

"What shall we then say to these things?" If this great God is for us, who can be against us? One word more, which is solemn. If God is against you, who can be for you?

Amen.