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Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden. at Scaynes Hill on Sunday Afternoon January 8th 1939

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39.

The hymn that you have now sung (405) is a beautiful sermon on the text. I felt when you were singing it, it was enough; all I should add to it I felt would spoil it. It seems as if we could conclude the service with that precious, full hymn. There is a solemn way, a terrible way, in which some will never be separated from Christ for they were never united to Him. You can never be separated from that to which you had no union. How does it fall on your ear?

The. hymn you have just sung In the prayer meeting filled my heart with desire,

*O love divine, how sweet thou art,
When shall I find My willing heart
All taken up with thee.*

Does your heart respond thus to it?

We tried to speak,, though feebly, this morning of the love of God which is in Christ and a little of the effect of it, how it is found and the working of it. Now this afternoon, as enabled, we desire to set up against this love everything else. Everything outside of Christ is an enemy to a child of God. Everything! If you look to any other quarter, or for anything different than opposition and enmity, if you are a child of God you will not find it. There is no standing ground in the eyes of the Lord,, there is no rest for the sole of the foot of a child of God outside of the Ark, and the Lord will bring you to know this by painful experience, *'We've no abiding city here.'* We read of those who looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God. They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Do you want a better country than this world, or is it good enough for you? I remember one master for whom I worked, he used to think a lot of his stock and he often spoke to me about his private affairs. One day when he had had a lot of things in we had put them in the fixtures; he said to me 'These are all mine, they are all paid for.' Has, the Lord, my friends, ever given you to look at the things He has given us jn Christ? "He that spared not his own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also freely give us all things." Everything that His love contains He gives the Church. The apostle says 'I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from His love.' Where did he get that persuasion from? Upon what ground was he persuaded? Was he persuaded and resolved that he would never give up the truth; that he would never be bewitched by errors? Was he persuaded that he would maintain the traditions of his Fathers? Was he persuaded that he would hold on to the Scriptures, and to the law of God, and never depart from it? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." You will find, my friends, solemnly in the Scriptures and particularly in the epistle to the Hebrews, warnings against apostasy, and although that epistle was written to the saints yet every example of separation from, the love of God, every example of those who turned back and walked not after Christ, was a reprobate.

In the sixth chapter how solemnly the condition of a reprobate is set out. It le impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the

Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away.” - Reprobate! though they have partaken of those things, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost, reprobate! How is that? how can a man be a partaker of the Holy Ghost and be a reprobate? This is one way - if you sit under a living ministry in which is the Holy Ghost, those of you who hear it, in so such as the Holy Ghost is in that man's ministry you are a partaker of the Holy Ghost and accountable to God for it. Balaam was a partaker of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost used him to speak the truth, not to know it, he did not possess it, but he was a partaker of the Holy Ghost in his natural faculties. The point we are or want to keep in mind is that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, but I want to impress upon you that the Holy Spirit may search us by His truth, that one can go very far, even to the gate of heaven, as Bunyan says ‘I found that from the gate of heaven there as way to hell.’ In my Pilgrim’s Progress at home that belonged to my late dear godly Mother, there she has put a note,, (which is very like her) where it says, ‘I found that from the gate of heaven there was a way to hell’ she has put this ‘but blessed be God, there is a way from the gate of hell to Heaven.’

But with regard to this solemn matter, those who are separated from the truth, who were partakers of the Holy Ghost in the way I have mentioned, and Balaam! What more blessed desire can be in the heart of a child of God than this, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”? The man that had that blessed desire is in hell. ‘I am persuaded that nothing can separate.’ But we must be careful on what ground we are, my friends, the persuasion that the Apostle Paul had, and the only right persuasion we ever have is this, the witness of the Holy Ghost in our heart that we are the children of God. And this does not mean some airy vision, some great discovery. You will see that Isaiah was brought down to the depths, as it is recorded, “For thus saith the high and lofty one and that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that it of a contrite end humble spirit ” “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor end of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.”

Another way that you will be persuaded that morning can separate you from the love of God in Christ is when it is shed abroad in your heart. Have you ever known what it is, my friends, to find the oil to flow? Have you ever known what it is for Divine life and light to be let down into your soul? Have you ever known what it is to be perhaps in a crowded city, yet for the peace of God to be in your heart, and your affections set or things above, even amid all the outside attractions? Do you know what it is under the preaching of the gospel to feel your broken bones healed? When you have been filled with anxious cares and darkness then for the Sun of Righteousness to shine in your heart? Do you know what it is for Him to come skipping or the hills, over the mountains of your impossibilities? Do you know what this is?

*Yes! I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given,
More happy,, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits inheaven.*

That is a persuasion, a persuasion of the Spirit.

But let us look at these things. ‘For I am persuaded that neither death.’ He commences with the last or greatest enemy. The wisdom or mercy or grace of God is emphasised often in the way and manner of His manifestation. You remember in John 14, when the Lord was about to be taken away

from his people, He comforted them by saying this "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you." He set before them this end, this blessed end, the reward, the crown of salvation, the celestial city where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

To encourage these disconsolate troubled disciples of His, He sets before them the best. So the Apostle in order to emphasize the power of the love of God in the heart, commences with the greatest, the most formidable enemy, death. No kind of death will separate you from the love of God in Christ, those of you who are His, and have union with Him. The death of your unregeneracy did not separate you from Christ when He found you dead in sin; when He found you as Ezekiel speaks of it, as a wretched infant, cast out in the open field, polluted in its own blood; it was a time of love. The death, the filth the guilt did not separate from the love of God which is in Christ. He came for that purpose. The real, the main the ultimate reason for Christ coming to this earth is the recovery of sinners. In that one tremendous act there is salvation, nothing could stop Him, love is irresistible. There is nothing like love, even of an earthly kind, it will go through fire and through water till it reaches its object. It will allow nothing to stand between. So you will never be separated from this love by death. And those of you who are in deaths oft, those who today may have a feeling of death, He knew what this was. Oh the power of the great faculty faith in the heart! This is that which is attracted to Christ, the love of God in Christ.

I think Heman's case in the 88th Psalm was one of the most pitiable in the Scriptures. So low did he get that he cried out "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Shall Thy loving kindness be declared in the grave?" How impossible!! Have you ever been brought into such a place of death in the soul as to feel 'I do not think that I shall ever pray again; I do not think that I shall ever again have the sweet communion I have had. I shall never feel a broken heart.' There is a death. 'Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?' As though he said 'Why should He?' If there was a wonder to be shown this place they would not take it to the cemetery, but to the market. I tell you what this will do. Faith will have an eye and turn that question into a prayer. Instead of exclaiming it as an impossibility, it turns it to a prayer 'Lord wilt Thou for Christ's sake show that wonder to me? It will be a wonder if Thou dost, but wilt Thou show that wonder? It will be a wonder if I ever return to those sweet moments spent before the cross. Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead?' Death will not separate that soul from the love of God in Christ. The secret of it is this my friends, and I have been thankful for it at times, the love is not in ourselves, in the root or in the source, but only in the streams. The fountain is in God, the source is in Him, He controls the streams when He pleases, as we read in the 107th Psalm "He turneth rivers into a wilderness and the water springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." But He also "turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs." He controls the springs, and this condition, this death, this barrenness, this stagnant condition you may get into will not separate you from the love of God which is in Christ, You do not control the streams!

Neither will the end separate, my friends, from the love of Christ. Perhaps some of you may receive in the midst of tribulation good news from a far country. Perhaps some of you may have been brought to hear this good news in your parched and labouring soul -

*Thou shalt see my glory soon
When the work of grace is done.*

It is not done yet. But death will not separate you from the Love of Christ. Why? "Because blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." When did they die – in Him. My friends, if when you die you are out of Christ then you will prove the awfulness of death retaining its sting, and the grave retaining its victory. But if when you die you die in the Lord, you died in Him when He died. There is a union as you have sung, between the church and Christ so that everything that He did He did as a substitute. This is the great reason, the main reason, the main root and strength of this union; it can't be separated because of our union with Christ. When you were born you went from the womb speaking lies – you were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. When Christ was born He was holy, harmless and undefiled and He was a substitute the moment He began to breathe. Think of it! You whose hope is in Him, He breathed for you because your breath was that of iniquity. He brought into His sacred humanity all the holiness of God and brought it to earth for you, so that your salvation began at His very birth. Right from the very beginning He had to be strict in keeping the law. From the very moment that He breathed His life was substitutionary, because it was necessary for His people. The moment they began to breathe they breathed out curse and death. It is by virtue of this union nothing will ever separate between the soul and God. There can be in the death of every child of God this note of victory demanded by the grave and of death "O grave! Where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?" It has got a sting my friends and it has got a victory and it retains it. Where is it? "The sting of death is sin." There is the victory of the grave- the Law. It retains it for all that are under the law, for all who die in their sins. But with regard to all that are in Christ it says 'Where is thy sting' He took it out' Where is thy victory.' Christ took the victory when He led captivity captive and He took the victory out of the grave for us. Christ having fulfilled the law and worked out a perfect righteousness, He could not be holden of death. He satisfied the law – it could not hold Him – He went to the end of it. So Christ must rise and you who are His, your resurrection is sure through Him. Death cannot separate you rather it will bring you into ineffable union with Him. That prayer of His will be answered in the case of every of you for whom He prayed. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold My glory." That is what death will do for you.

'Nor life.' Oh life! Look at it! Those of you who are in the midst of it, those of you who are bearing the heat and the burden of the day; oh you young people, the Lord knows who are His and He knows what is before you. Look at life! Look at the influences; look at this world and the intrigues of the Devil! Look at the awful opposition, how overwhelming the opposition is! But life cannot separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. There is enough in us to separate us. I like that word in the Hebrews where it speaks of those who desire a better country, that is an heavenly, that if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out they might have had opportunity to have returned. Life is still here, the world is still here, the amusements, the Lord's people once enjoyed are still here. "They might have had opportunity to have returned, but now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly." Only one thing will do this. The union was made in eternity and only one thing will give such union in experience - that is to be allured as we have it in Hosea "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortable unto her; I will give her her vineyards from thence." From the wilderness! Is this world a wilderness unto you? I will repeat the question that I asked this morning – If your possessions of this world were removed from you would you have anything left? God knows. He has removed much of our earth from some of us. I know what it is to be emptied so as to know not which way to turn. Habakkuk said "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be found in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail and the

fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herds in the stalls – everything gone to pieces – yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Life shall not separate us from the love of God which is in Christ. If we have union with Him, God applies some of those things to test us, my friends. Where He has given faith He will try it and He will bring some of these things against our religion and against our faith. He will try everyman’s work of what sort it is and He will prove that a good bit of His people’s religion is wood, hay and stubble. He finds it when He lights His fire. Where there is humility I like to find it; a person sitting down in the ashes when they have got through the fire, there will be more humility than there was before. This is their language ‘Thy will be done.’ They speak out of the dust. They have had things brought down about their ears and this is their language when they have suffered the loss of other things ‘Leave not my soul destitute. I am destitute other ways but leave not my soul destitute.’ When you sees a man who has passed through the fire – look at Asaph, he got into his head the portion of the wicked and envied it. I have done that, and so has many a child of God in adversity, when everything he does goes wrong. Everything may seem to go adversely with your business, with your body, and you look at the wicked – how fat they are! “I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree.” There are two ways in which God deals with His people when they get there. Sometimes He breaks up their fallow ground by a frost or a north wind; by rebukes He afflicts them. But at other times He brings a south wind, as He did with Asaph at that time. I sometimes think that a south wind humbles one more than the north. It breaks your heart to pieces when the Lord comes and speaks kindly to you.. Well, He brought Asaph into the Sanctuary and broke his heart. This is how He broke it – He gave him to see the end of the wicked and then to see the inheritance of the saints in light as his own portion. “So foolish and ignorant was I, I was as a beast before Thee.” But it brought him to this – O the love of God, how He mingled it with Asaph’s backsliding and he was brought to say this “Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.” Well, he did not allow this life to separate Asaph from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, neither will He you. He will bring you back.

‘Nor angels.’ There are fallen angels, and angels which are not fallen are God’s creatures, but it is as though He should say that there is nothing upon this earth and nothing higher than this world that He has created that He will allow to separate thee from Himself. To redeem us He took a nature that is a little lower than the angels. Look at this point ‘Nor angels shall separate from the love of Christ,’ in this respect, when man, who was created below the angels, fell, he fell below the beasts. You look over the gate at any animal; there is not a sin there. Only man is a sinner, only man is vile. How sunk we are! But because of His covenant with His people God does not say that now He will dwell with angels and that He has done with man and will dwell with angels. He did not make this union with angels though they were pure and holy. I believe the song of the redeemed sounds sweeter in heaven than the song of angels. He has made you more secure than you were before the fall and in a sense more blessed if you feel redeeming love in your heart. I would rather be a redeemed sinner than an innocent Adam. You think of it. You can only think of it if you have known what it is to feel you are a redeemed sinner and that you know the salvation of the Lord.

*Of all the crowns Jehovah wears
Salvation is his dearest claim.*

When man was innocent his salvation was in himself, he had a free will. Man was created with a free will, he has never had one since. Man was perfect, but this perfection was losable, and he lost it and man will never again get that state of innocence

*Not a glimpse of hope for me,
Only in Gethsemane.*

He will have men. Think of it. He wants men with Him! His thoughts were not with angels, but "His delights were with the sons of men; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth." O how that does come time after time in considering the cost of our salvation – 'Am I worth it?' You read that beautiful hymn 803 (Gadsby's) especially the 2nd part.

'Nor principalities.' Not the principalities of Satan. In Ephesians this is what we read the people of God wrestle against for Paul says "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers." These are the same principalities. We might ask a question here - Do you wrestle? Is there any wrestling in your religion, any labour attached to it? Or is it a belief? You can go to hell with a belief, with an orthodox religion, but you will never go to hell with Christ.

'Nor principalities.' Principalities are spirits. What is wrong with this world now my friends? Not flesh and blood but spirits – evil spirits evil passions of men. Look at the passions of our hearts. They would consume us. It is a mercy we are not consumed by our own spirits. Oh how different to His spirit! I remember eighteen months ago, without asking for it, the Lord mercifully brought into my heart His sacred peace and presence. I knew then what the answer to this prayer was "Renew a right spirit within me." It is a wonderful thing, an amazing thing to have a right spirit. You will have love to your enemies when you have a right spirit. As I went up to London that day I believe that spirit made itself felt in the carriage. It is not a proud spirit, but sanctified, meek and humble. Yes, it was God-exalting, God- glorifying. It drew my soul up to Him. Well the principalities – all the spirits on earth – rage, malice, hatred – these are the principalities. Look what they will do! Look what they will move! Oh the terrible capabilities of the mind of man! He is worse than the beasts, because God has endowed him with an intellect which He has not given to the beasts. It is not the guns that blow people to pieces; it is the intelligence, the spirit behind them that strikes the blow. Guns would be harmless but for these powers. It is in our own hearts and look at the lengths to which it will go, there is no limit. We have jealousy, murder – but says the apostle 'my own spirit will not separate me from the love of Christ.'

'Nor powers.' Earthly powers – look at the godly pastor in Germany who was offered deliverance if he would not preach the gospel, but his answer was 'I received my call to preach the gospel from God and I will obey God rather than man.' The powers of Germany and Hitler could not separate that godly man from the love of Christ and it will not you. Guns may blow your bodies to pieces, but they cannot blow a good hope to pieces. It will remain. They might blow your body to pieces and land you in eternal glory and that is the most that they can do.

'Nor things present.' What present things have you got? Affliction? Family difficulties? Bearing reproach? These will not separate you, whatever you are passing through. Oh what a God we have got! Oh what a gospel, how full and how rich! I do not wonder that Jeremiah in his trial said "The

Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him." I do not mind going by every other portion since my portion is in Him.

*When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.*

"Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." Present things will not separate you. Have some of got things that you say 'This will prove me; this will separate; this will overcome me.' It will not. The root is in Him; the foundation is in Him. They will never cause never cause the rivers of mercy to cease towards you finally; they will flow again.

'Nor things to come.' Some of you may fear this year. I fear this year (1939) with all its mountains. Perhaps some of you see trouble coming, but remember "He has led captivity captive." Everything that has led you captive He has led captive. You remember in one place there were five kings hiding in the cave of Hakkedah, but Joshua said 'Bring them out.' Then he called on the men of Israel to put their feet on their necks. Has the Lord done that for you? Have you known what it is to have sat under the gospel and for your enemies to be put under your feet? Your unbelief, your carnal desires, and your infidelity to be overcome and you a weak creature given the victory?

'Nor height.' No heights will separate you, not heights of guilt. This will not lead one to say 'I will continue in sin that grace may abound.' Why? Because of the love of God shed abroad in the heart. No heights of guilt His grace can supersede. Think of it. No, He will never allow you to do anything that will separate you from the love of God. How secure you are that are in Him. 'Nor heights nor depths.' No depths into which you may fall. Not the depth into which you fell in Adam. No depths of guilt – David fell, oh how David fell! The depth of it did not separate him from the love of Christ. It was in Christ my friend – that is where your life is; that is where your hope is.

'Nor any other creature.' I like that word. It is like this – perhaps we have taken in all the cases. One might say 'I have something that you have not mentioned which I fear will separate me.' But it says 'nor any other creature.' Nothing! Nothing will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Oh the gospel, the value of it, the greatness of it!

Well, may the Lord add His blessing. Amen.