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Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Scaynes Hill on Sunday Morning 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.

This is a great text, I stand before it like a little child before the ocean, but if the Lord gives us to taste, a mere taste of this divine love, my friends, we shall know the nature of it, and the power of it. The secret of life in the soul is union with Christ. That point in living experience is essential. If there is no living contact, if we have no union with Christ we are dead. No matter how correct or orthodox we may be in our religion, in that one thing is life, and there only. There may be much religion without union with Christ, much correct religion, but only from living union with Christ is life derived. All sap must come from that living root of the Vine if we ever bring forth fruit unto salvation. The point is, have we union with Christ? Those of you who hope your religion is that which will stand in that dreadful day of God, have you in your experience, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, those evidences that you have union with Christ?

It is necessary in the first place, as far as we may be led into it by the Holy Spirit, to speak of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is that from which the Apostle was persuaded that nothing could separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the love of the Trinity, it ever flows, it flowed before any worlds. The mysterious relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is sustained by that ineffable love of the Trinity. It is beyond our comprehension, it is unaffected by any outside agency. It would ever have flowed if men had not been created. God not only loves, but He is love, the essence of it, eternal divine love but the text and indeed any part of the Scriptures and any apprehension or communication of this divine love, can only be as it is in Christ. Therefore the Apostle thus states this beautiful, this profound doctrine of the love of God as it is in Christ. And it is a part, an expression of this love that it is in Christ. It is there so that it might be communicable to poor sinners. Anything in God apart from Christ could never be communicated to His creatures. This river, this infinite, bottomless, shoreless river of His love is the source of all that emanates from God. Everything, There is only one cause for all this, and that cause is the sovereign love of God, nothing else. And He in His sovereign will, the only sovereign will, by His sovereign love decreed this blessed river should have an outlet, and the outlet that divine wisdom appointed was in the person of His dear Son, and one of the greatest, the greatest amazement to faith is this, that this divine love should ever be directed to sinners – "His delights were with the sons of men." "God so loved the world." He loved the world in such a way, such a manner, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This in the first outlet, the first manifestation of His love to His creatures.

Outside of Himself the first act of God was the creation. Creation and the world created, my friend, were not made merely for man to dwell on this earth for their profit. If we had by faith some understanding, some gracious understanding of the infinite wisdom of God in the creation of the world, we should view things differently from what we do. According to men the world, the things of it are for their profit. Oh the darkness, the ignorance, the covetousness, the worldliness and the gross darkness of the people. Men in their natural state say 'Who is the Lord that we should obey

Him?' They say that their way is in themselves, that they are their own; they are going to such a city and abide there a year, and buy and sell gain get gain. So men's thoughts are this, the world and the pleasures of it, the treasures of it, the profit of it, are merely the end for which it was created. There is one end for which this world was created, that is this, that God should form a people for Himself that they should show forth His praise. Every act of God in creation, in providence and in grace is subservient to sovereign election. Everything! And this flows from the love of God in Christ. Really God has nothing to do with any other part of His creation but His people, except that in His faithfulness He causes His sun to shine on the just and on the unjust and He is good to the unthankful. He maintains the lot of the world; He maintains the lot of his creatures. All His creatures are dependent on Him. But with regard to eternity He had nothing to do with any part of the creation but his people. There in His church do all the springs of His love flow, and as for the church, when they by faith see their standing in him, they are able to say *'All our springs are in Thee.'* So it may be said with regard to God, to Jehovah, in all His dealings that all His springs, all His communications and dealings with men, are, with regard to eternity, for the church. What an important thing it is to know whether we are among that people! Every influence of His love, all the tremendous issues of it, all the workings of it, all the mighty intentions of Jehovah in it are in the church, toward His people. In this love we see this divine sovereignty, immutability, irresistibility - nothing can resist it. It contains in itself the mystery of godliness, not only in the blessed fulness of it as it is in Christ, Christ manifested in the flesh - this is the fulness of God in Him, but also there is the mystery of godliness in the workings of grace in the heart. This not only flows from love, but it is in love to the church.

'The love of God in Christ Jesus.' You see it in a blaze in Christ in Incarnate Deity, my friends, there you see the love of God to sinful men that is what I might call the definite contact with men. Almighty God took hold of human nature and brought it into an ineffable union with His divine person, never to be dissolved. The love of God in Christ Jesus. Let us look at that point. If you have faith its root will go down until in your experience you reach this Rock, and if by the Spirit you are building a house that will stand the storm that is coming you will dig and dig, or rather the holy Ghost will dig and dig in your experience, and never allow you to stop until you get to this Rock. The nature of angels would not do so that living contact is made with man. He took not unto Him the nature of angels but of the seed of Abraham - of man.

The Apostle puts it so beautifully in Colossians. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth. for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And this is the point where this love reaches the earth, my friend, Sin, which by the permissive will of God entered into the Garden of Eden, drove asunder those blessed foundations of salvation; mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, were driven asunder with regard to man they could not meet upon him they could not meet in him. The dispensation of God surrounds every person on this earth, either in bending against them the awful justice of God, or the love of God in Christ being theirs in all its blessedness and life; in the other case in all its terrible justices *'The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* Let us trace this love as it flows, that is, the channel it comes in. Says Christ in John 10 "He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep." Oh, view Him those of you who long to see Him and feel this love, see this Shepherd enter this world by the sacred door of His

humanity. He is the eternal Son of God. What does He bring in it through that door? He brings in all this eternal God contains.

There is at times such a glorious, such an unfathomable depth in those profound doctrines as they are felt in the soul, we can do nothing but stand and adore and worship. For instance, this took place, when the eternal love of God was in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead was thus manifested in Christ, not a part of it. Think of it. You cannot think of it but as by faith when nature gives out, when reason can no more follow, yet faith can believe. The fulness of the Godhead bodily. I have seen heaven; I have seen my salvation I hope in that one word 'bodily.' Had it been anywhere else we should never have known the love of God in Christ. This love would never have been communicated, never 'been focused on the church in that particular way so that there could be that mysterious transfer "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." How boldly this divine Shepherd entered thus through that blessed door into the fold. And then you trace this love of God in Christ as He fulfilled the law as He worked out righteousness. View this love of God in Christ taking him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. What for? That He might be an High Priest. "We have not an high Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." The love of God in Christ did this for you. So that when His people are tempted they are not tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape. Then view Him, my friends, as He is in the garden of Gethsemane. O look at the mysterious love of God in Christ Jesus. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him." Are you worth it? Those of you who have felt five minutes peace in your conscience, the chastisement of that peace was upon Him. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Love would pay that price, and it paid that price in in His beloved Son. The love of God in Christ moved in Him, He hath put Him to grief. It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has made him to be sin. Think of it. This is the love of God in Christ flowing to the church; these are the streams which made glad the city of our God. Have they ever flowed into your heart? They will never flow there, my friend, until in more or less measure you are given to see the cost of them. It is the love of God in Christ in His person. It is the love of God in Christ in smiting Him. *Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?" The love of God in Christ moved Him to forsake His beloved Son. I once more say to you who know Him. who desire to know Him Do you feel worth it? The love of God in Christ Jesus upon the cross. And think of this, all this is to His people, to His church. Such an High Priest became us, was necessary for us. It is said of Him "He keepeth all His bones, not one of them is broken." His was a violent death. "No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my father." Everything was according to the determinate counsel of God's will, and this part of his death was according thereto, that "He keepeth all His bones, not one of them is broken."

Now you see the love of God in Christ Jesus upon the cross, see the taunting crowd, "He saved others, himself He cannot save." Love would not allow Him to love His life. My friends, He that loveth his life shall lose it. A remarkable scripture that is in the twelfth of John – "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," and then it goes on to say "He that loveth his life shall lose." as if to say, Had Christ never died there would have been no fruit brought forth. But see the love of God in this particular; He was God's first elect. There had to be a foundation stone, and it was called a tried stone, a tested stone. No other

could be found. He is our salvation Therefore he had to be as a corn of wheat capable of dying to bring forth the corn in the ear, the whole church of God not one less. This seed fell into the ground and died and he brought forth the whole church of God, not one grain will be left behind I wonder how many grains of this ear there are here! You must go to heaven. Not that there is any necessity in God to save his people, except this. Your lost condition is not a necessity in God to save you from it. If you believe this, and if this is brought into your heart, you will see the exceeding love of God in Christ. It was not necessary for God to do anything for our salvation, only the love of God in Christ made it a necessity. This is where the necessity is, in the covenant of grace. Salvation flows from His sovereign love, and sovereign will. He laid himself under obligation in the covenant. There is no obligation in God to do anything for our salvation, he would be just if He left man just as he fell, but he laid Himself under obligation in the covenant to save His people, therefore you rust go to heaven those of you who are in it. Therefore this corn of wheat died to bring forth those that are in Christ, *'One in the tomb; one when He rose.'* You must go to heaven though earth and hell obstruct your way.

See then the love of God in Christ on the cross. When they came and broke the legs of the two thieves they did not break His bones, they could not. Why? Because the Scriptures must be fulfilled He keepeth all His bones.' Who are His bones? His church. How many of His bones, I wonder, are in this chapel? "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." He would not have His legs broken. They broke the legs of the other two to increase the pain to hasten the end; they broke their legs, but He would not have his legs broken, He keepeth all His bones. This is typical of the church. So He bore the pain that his people might be set free, Oh the love that filled His heart; and the love of God in Christ when He bowed His sacred head and said "It is finished." When He rose my friends, then He led captivity captive, and there you see the love of God, you see the mighty conqueror. Then the love of God cleared your way to heaven. Then, as He said to His disciples, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." Nowhere else! You will never be allowed to find peace anywhere else, and you will not want it, for as He said "My peace I give unto you." This is a different kind of peace to what the world gives. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Oh the love of God in Christ as it is manifested in an overcome world. It does not appear to be overcome, but it is, there is no enemy. The child of God can now say, even to those enemies which look as though they would devour them. "Rejoice not against me O mine enemy! rejoice not against me, O world, Christ has overcome the world; rejoice not against me even my sins; rejoice not against me O devil; "Though I fall" (I will not belittle the enmity, they are mighty enemies) "Though I fall I shall arise, and when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." 'The love of God in Christ.' Then this is the love of God in Christ, as He declared His name. God bore witness of His beloved Son; He bore witness of His work. You remember on the mount of transfiguration, when the cloud was on the mount, there was a voice "This is my beloved Son hear ye Him." Again at his baptism when the Holy Ghost descended on Him as a dove - "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then again when He went into heaven.

See the love of God in Christ in this respect, my friends that He did not dissolve that body that He had taken, but went to heaven the same as He was before. He was the same in His Person - "I am the Lord, I change not." but He took into heaven that body; He took it there, and there He is in that body; and as such he can be such an High Priest in things for men to God, that is to say, He can mediate as a great high priest to God for His people. There is the throne of grace. That is the ground

the Apostle sets us, therefore, because of this High Priest; because of that human nature that is in heaven; because of the law fulfilled in that human nature; because of that righteousness wrought out by Man, not by angels; because of His perfect obedience; and because He took that nature for is church; because the law is honoured, the infinite justice of God is satisfied; therefore come boldly. That in the only ground or which we can pray.

'The love of God in Christ.' It really means this, my friends, the love of God to the church, and His righteous character was not infringed, that is to say, sinners can come upon just grounds to God. Oh the power of His love

*A Man there is a real man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands and feet, and side.*

This is love. This is where it is. Do you know it? Have you ever received it? The Apostle Peter gave a testimony, and I believe some of you will bear this testimony in your conscience, or rather, the Holy Spirit will bear testimony for you, and in you. He said "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." Is He precious to you? Is He more to you than a historical name, a biblical name? Have you ever received anything from Him? "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." You can reverse the text and it will still stand good - Christ is precious to you which believe. If He has ever been precious to you in any of his characters it is a sign that you have true faith. If ever he has been precious to you, precious to you in reading the Scriptures, precious to you in hearing the gospel, precious to you it prayer, or in the necessity of Him you are a believe And there is this , my friends, as it is with salvation, salvation is either everything to you or it is nothing. There is no neutral ground. If ever you have received one spring one living spring from God, then all your springs are in Him. It must be so. 'The love of God in Christ.' The Holy Ghost sheds it abroad in the heart. You cannot receive it and not know it. Therefore the Apostle says "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye it Him." Have you received Him? Do you know what it is to feel a little of His love shed abroad in your heart - perhaps not in what is called the assurance of faith but have you ever had the love of God shed abroad in your heart in an objective way? You may think of this in an objective way when Christ is set before you as an object of attraction. But my friend if ever you have had the love of Christ as the object of your attraction it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is all by faith it is received by faith, loved by faith, believed in by faith. A blessed grace is faith. Ever so little of it is grace. If I might with reverence compare it to a magnet, it is attractive, and is attracted to everything that comes from heaven and will refuse everything else. I have sometimes said this and it comes to this point in hand - faith is a magnet and if you put a magnet into box with iron rivets and brass rivets, you can take out all the iron rivets, not one brass rivet will cling to the magnet. So my friends, faith goes out after the things of God which attract it when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. Do you know what this living faith is? "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." You might find Him in affliction, in family trial, in the withering of you business, and also in darkness of soul and felt absence of God. Do you know what it is? Because faith lives there; it lives under those loads, and perhaps a heart-felt sigh goes out after those waters which are necessary to the preservation of its roots. 'If only I knew where I might find Him. Oh that I could but find my God.

*Thou O Christ art all I want
All in all in Thee I find.*

Do you know those workings? Well that is the love of God shed abroad in the heart. And the love of God in Christ is also manifested in this, my friends, in a life of faith. "The just shall live by faith." And faith lives not upon sight, not upon seen things, but upon unseen things, and faith will enable the soul to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, it has respect unto the recompense of the reward. Is there anything of this in our religion? Oh that the truth might be turned as a searchlight into our consciences It is no use listening to sermons, it is no use to preach sermons if we are not searched by them. "The entrance of thy word giveth h light." If God were taken out of your religion, would you miss Him? if not He is only a name. But some would say 'if He was taken out of my life there would be nothing left.' For instance, take the 46th Psalm "God is our refuge and strength." What other refuge have we left? If God was taken out of my life this is just what it would leave, desolation, darkness, hopelessness. Put it the other way; let us try to discern where it is. Perhaps some of you might know this extreme experience. Take everything out of your life but God, would you have anything left then? Could not some of you say 'He has not taken away my all, Himself he gives me still.' I can remember, it was about twenty nine years ago since I came into this chapel, when I sat in that seat over there when I began to be in want. Oh the tenderness of those days! I would like to feel it now. I knew no one in the chapel and those were the days in which I knew nothing about the externals of religion, but I began to be in want, there was mighty famine in my land. But soon after that, when I left this part there was a good business offered me, which if I had taken I might have been well off, but it was in a desert land; if I had taken that I should be where there was no food and this proposition come to me when there was a famine in my soul. I went with my father to see this place, it was what some would call the opportunity of my life, and a godly man had this business. At the end of the day he said to me 'What do you think of it?' I said, 'It is better than I anticipated, but I cannot come.' 'Why not?' 'If I come I shall come for the bread which perisheth, there is nothing else here.' But I believe in the mercy of God He will never be a debtor to anybody. My friends, if you for his sake are enabled to give up something He will give you something better, and though it was so many years ago, I humbly believe there is a connection between that period and the solemn position I am in now. "The way of man is not in himself."

Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. Then it says she hath killed her beasts; she bath mingled her wine:" Not adulterated it, not mixed it with something else, but mingled His love with his dealings, with your losses, with your witherings in business, and how you see His love reflected in your tribulations. The Psalmist said, "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when ore cleaveth wood upon the earth." Perhaps some of you know this, not only at the grave's mouth, but ready to be buried. Your bones may be scattered in your family. Bones are the framework, the support of things. Perhaps God has scattered your bones in material things, or in family things. The Psalmist said, "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cleaveth wood upon the earth; but my heart is up unto the Lord." There was faith, he knew the love of God, and he knew even those dealings of God to be in love. These afflictions are like a frost which breaks up the fallow ground. Perhaps some of God's people have been bewitched by the things of this world, prosperity comes, prayer ceases, there is no exercise but the love of God in Christ by His Spirit will follow that man up, lay him upon his back. He comes in affliction, He loves him. The love of God is Christ Jesus our L ord. Do you know it?

The Lord add His blessing. Amen.