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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at "Galeed" Chapel, Brighton
Sunday morning, 18th December 1966.

What shall we then say to these things ?
If God be for us, who can be against us ?

Romans 8. v.31.

We cannot exaggerate the importance of the two questions in the text. This verse has two questions: "What shall we then say to these things ?" "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" The second really answers the first, "What shall we then say to these things ?", we will say this, that "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" Most important word, and that little word 'then' is significant, you can read the verse without it, it would not alter the sense, "What shall we say to these things ?" but "What shall we THEN say to these things ?", considering the nature of them, the glory of them, the eternity of them.

Well, what are these things ? The immediate reference to the things contained in the chapter in the epistle, things concerning salvation, things that accompany salvation, and especially those things that have been referred to in the preceding context. "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them He also called, whom He called them He also justified, whom He justified them He also glorified".

What shall we say to it ? But I feel it safe with respect to the Lord's people to refer these things to everything that concerns them from the cradle to the grave, and if this word should be in our hearts we should be under the influence of the Spirit of meditation, and that meditation may have things in it which are exceedingly painful and distressing and, on the other hand, things full of joy, full of glory.

Perhaps it would not be out of place to say why I brought this word before you. Considerinf my own case, my own life, the millions of things in life's minutest circumstances, and I felt my heart would sink. O what a tremendous thing one individual life is ! and what makes up that life from day to day - and if you are given a sight of it the text will come in. "What shall we then say to these things ?", and the answer will be, "If God be for us, who", in the worst of our things, in the worst of our cases, "If God be for us, who can be against us ?"

But we would take the matter, these things, in three provinces. What shall we say to these things as it respects the works of God in general ? and the works of God in providence, as well as the works of God in grace ? What shall we say to them ? It will have, by the Spirit if it is applied a very sobering affect, and each one will have their own things, I say from the cradle to the grave, their own things; and there may be some solemn and sobering moments when one is brought, as I think it was dear Miss Steele said,

"Here let me search my inmost mind
And try its real state to find,
The secret things of thought explore and
Call my words and actions o'er".

and what shall we say to these things ? O a mercy if God is for us ! Paul answers the question in the fullest extent in the 28th verse. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". I thought when we were singing the hymn, this question could be attached to every hymn that we sing - and it is well at times to feel exercised about what we sing. The hymn that we have just sung, and indeed I think it could be said of every hymn at the conclusion, "What shall we then say to these things ?" and to every chapter in the Bible, "What shall we then say to these things ? But to come to the works of God. Read that majestic,

beautiful description of the creation in the 1st chapter of Genesis, What shall we then, seeing the mystery of creation, God created all things from nothing, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and by that creation He maintains us in life, he opens the hand of creation and satisfieth the desire of every living thing naturally, He is the author of life, vegetable life, animal life, human life, spiritual life, "What shall we then say to these things ?" It leaves nothing out. O how solemn it is for those who say that that beautiful description of creation is a myth, that the Lord did not create the universe in six days, their puny reason against the majesty, the infinite wisdom of Jehovah, and they would try and point to another Scripture that "1,000 years in God's sight are but one day", therefore it must have taken 6,000 years; but if they read the 1st chapter of Genesis it will tell them the truth and it is purposely repeated, "The morning and the evening were the first day", "The morning and the evening were the second day", O how blind are some of our scholars, religious atheists that are turned out of colleges. But what do we say to them ? What shall we then say to the works of God in creation ? Have you ever admired them and adored the Creator ? "All Thy works praise Thee and Thy saints shall bless Thee". There is a beauty, a glory in creation, inimitable is that working, no man can imitate the work, they may invent, but invention is a very different thing from creation. All men's inventions or men's work are dead works. You cannot point out one thing that a man has made or invented that has any life in it, you see if you can find one, it is dead.

"What shall we then say to the works of God, His faithfulness that is round about Him ?" And the universe that was brought into being by His word, by the same word is kept in store. What shall we then say to the things of creation, we will say this - If that glorious Creator Who has the fulness of all creation in Himself, if that Creator is our God, who can be against us ? A comfort to a tried pilgrim,

"With heaven and earth at His command
He waits to answer prayer".

What shall we then say to these things"? with respect to providence ? The sovereignty of God is manifested in providence. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord". You take that declaration of divine sovereignty and then look at your own life, your own case, and go back and take notice of what great lots have been cast into the lap and how the Lord has disposed of it here and there; and look at the way, "All the way the Lord thy God has led thee these 40 years in the wilderness", What shall we then say ? In view of ourselves, of our sins wherein we should have destroyed ourselves, What shall we then say in view of our enemies, in view of dangers, seen and unseen, in view of calamities, disappointments ? "What shall we then say to these things ?" If that God, Who rules "Who rolls the stars along", if that God, Whose sovereignty permeates all things according to His own will, if that God is for us, who can be against us ? "I gave Ethiopia for thee, and Seba, I gave men for thy sake", and if necessary, there may be men or a man that stands in your way, in your pathway, but the Lord can remove him and give men for thy sake, Nations for your sake.

What shall we then say to the things that we have passed through in the wilderness ? We often come back to the 107th Psalm. It is as though, not in the words, but in the spirit of the text, the Psalmist was brought to this conclusion, O the changes they went through, "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way", and some of you have known that solitary way, been brought to the very ends of the earth, to the end of your own resources, to the end of your strength, to the end of your wisdom ? What shall we then say to these extremities - "If God be for us, who can be against us ?"

Then there is the most important things, the things concerning salvation. This chapter contains some very solemn things. Some very lightly say, what a blessed chapter it is, what a good beginning it is, "There is therefore now no condemnation", anybody likes to hear that,

no condemnation, but to whom? "To them that are in Christ Jesus", and how are we to know who they are? "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". "What shall we then say to these things? Some poor sinner would look within, see so much of the flesh, feel so much of the workings of the flesh, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh that you are ready to conclude that you are out of the secret altogether; but if faith is given to behold the glorious Substitute, the Mediator, then you will have the answer of the text, "If God be for me, who can be against me?". This can even be said with respect to sin, not lightly. Those of you who have been brought to know your sinfulness, your ruin, it is a very solemn knowledge, and to realise that in you that is in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing. To feel, not by just fancy, or by reading it in the Word, but to feel within yourself you have nothing but putrefaction, and that is according to Scripture, putrifying sores, and to realise that in your loins is a loathsome disease, "What shall we then say to those things?" Could such an answer be given even with respect to those things that appear for our condemnation? yes, if God, God in Christ is for us, our sins shall never be against us.

So you go through this chapter and see the solemn discrimination between the flesh and the Spirit. It has been a very searching word to me many times. Brings us to self-examination. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit", and when you read that you will look within and consider what you are after, where your affections are, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also".

But the Apostle, he brings it down to the essence, the quintessence of salvation, that beautiful chain that runs through the whole work of salvation, the foreknowledge of God. What shall we then say to the infinite foreknowledge of God? We cannot comprehend it, but faith does apprehend it. The foreknowledge of God is an eternal prescience incomprehensible is the mind of God as is everything concerning His infinite Being. If we only had that declaration to make it would not be profitable to us, to believe that God is incomprehensible would be no profit to us, but to have revealed to us the incomprehensible God through the Mediator, His dear Son, would make that great God a comfort to poor sinners, He would otherwise be a consuming fire, and O what an attraction this has been! To see all divine perfection meet in a Man, a real Man, the Man Christ Jesus, where those perfections can be and are made a refuge for sinners. Foreknowledge. God cannot know at one time what He did not know before. It is a mystery. I would not, God knows I do not feel to have the ability nor the strength, to exercise myself with things too high for me; you might say well, I do think you are getting pretty near it when you come to talk of the incomprehensible God, I know I am. When that great God is seen in the Person of His dear Son, I will tell you what it will do, O it will be so suitable to your case, as you are taught your need that none less than this infinite God can help you, you will be glad He is what He is, because He alone could deal with your case. Do you feel that? Put it in this way, Do you feel, do you wish that this great God was less than what He is? Do you feel that a consideration of His majesty is too high for you to consider? Well, if He were not Who and what He is we should sink in despair. But to see that majesty in His mercy. His salvation that reaches sinners is an incomprehensible salvation really, though a salvation that is wrought in the heart, the mystery of godliness in the incarnation of His dear Son is a mystery, but His people receive the benefit of it.

"What shall we then say to these things" in the Gospel? If this God be for us, no other God, who can be against us? He is omnipotent, and it is impossible to have two omnipotencies. Satan is mighty, he is not almighty, but God is. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate". There must be foreknowledge before predestination. He knew every individual that the Lord Jesus should redeem, every one, down

to the very end of time and every one of those saved souls He predestinated, predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. What shall we then say to this ? predestination. Some of our Bishops wish that it could be expunged from the Prayer Book, and what do you say about it ? Everything in personal salvation proceeds from predestination, and predestination flows from the infinite foreknowledge of God the Father and the motive is His own sovereign love, His sovereign will. Predestinated, that is destiny presecured, and here it is to be predestinated, to be conformed to the image of His Son, and this was in the covenant of grace. These spiritual blessings that His people have in Christ Jesus are according as He hath chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world, and therefore, they flow from the covenant of grace. Yet these people who are thus predestinated are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, they are no better than reprobates when they are born as to their condition, not a bit, but even then, there is no condemnation. There is not a moment in the life of a child of God, from the cradle, even in his unregeneracy, that he is under condemnation. "There is therefore, now" and that now, can never be made past; it does not say there was no condemnation, but "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus", and His people were in Him before the world was, in the covenant of grace. Predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son. O what a mystery ! We need to pause under these most glorious truths. No difference whatever. But how are they to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son ? ~~O-what-a-mystery-~~ they are born in the image of the devil, "They are born in sin, shapen" wonderful expression, solemn expression, "shapen in iniquity", the shape of it, the image of it. Yet they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, very sacred truth.

"What shall we then say to these things ?" and how are they conformed, by being born again a new creature, the image conformed to the image of God's dear Son. Therefore, "Ye must be born again". It is essential and you will be brought to feel it and nothing different from that. Nothing less. You will realise it not only because the Bible says so, but because of a sense of your universal sinnership, the complete destitution of any life or godliness. Must be born again, you will believe it. Sometimes you will ask the Lord that you might be born again. If you really pray that prayer under a sense of the ruin of your being, you are born again. It is a blessing that no-one ever prays for, but those that are born again pray for it many many times.

What shall we then say to this ? Predestinated to be conformed to the image of His dear Son, He Who is the brightness of His Father's glory, the express image of His Person. O think of it poor sinner, unworthy sinner, dying sinner. Predestinated to such a conformation. This will take us through the grave, "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body", why my friends, it is amazing, if we believed it we should stand amazed. Do you ever think on it ? We read it, we believe, it but you look at those two declarations: "He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, Who shall change our vile body, fashion it like unto His glorious body", Not fashion it like unto an Angel or to the greatest Apostle, but nothing less than unto His glorious Body, and here it says "To the image of His dear Son". I do not wonder that the hymnwriter prays -

"More of Thy image let me bear".

O my friends, if we make a profession and have a hope that we are predestinated to be conformed to the blessed image of God's dear Son, may we give diligence in our life and conduct to bear about us the image of His dear Son. I believe the glorious truth of the Gospel can most blessedly enrich a man, although you will say with the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I", O blessed truth ! I long for it. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." What shall we then :

say to these things?" Well, if that God is for us in Christ, who or what can be against us? "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called". It is a chain, every link of the chain is of gold. "Called". We spoke a little about this recently, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name", or called together in My name. So in every case where a sinner is predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son he will call, not one left out, and there is something very blessed in that term call. It means what it says, if a mother or a father are looking in a crowd to find their son, their children, their own son, their own daughter, when they recognise that one, they would call them.

It is an inward call in the first place, and if you have any evidence of being called, you are predestinated and you were in the everlasting love of the Father, given unto the Lord Jesus Christ. What shall we then say to these things? Well, if you are called by Christ you will have known a change, in some it is more conspicuous than in others. It was not very conspicuous in Lydia, not very conspicuous in Ruth, but it was the same calling. But it is very solemn, I have felt this, it is very solemn to make a profession of religion and not be a different person; O that tried me the other day. Searching, looking back over my sin-stained life, I thought it is possible to have joined a Church, made a profession, got into a pulpit, and yet never made another person from what I was, have a name, a reputation to live, and yet to be dead. Solemn consideration. I have a reputation to live otherwise you would not have me in the pulpit, but what a solemn thing if all my preaching and all my profession is in the flesh and I am not another person from what I was. Five minutes before this service commenced, in the vestry, I asked the Lord to forgive me preaching if I had no business to ever have preached; and some of you, looking at yourselves, may be brought to fall flat before Him. What then? O when the blessed Spirit reveals the fulness of the Gospel and you look, look into that perfect law of liberty and see there just the opposite to what you are, see there a fulness that will fill immensity, a righteousness to full perfection that can be imputed. Mercy, divine mercy and grace. Then you look at all those things that would cast you into despair and what shall we then, then, then, when the Gospel is revealed, when your eyes look into it and behold the Redeemer, hear His voice, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest", "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth", this end, when you have got to the end of everything? Ah what have you said when you have got to the ends of the earth, when you could go no farther? when you have got to the end of your prayers, "Look unto Me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth", Why? "I am God, there is none else". Then you can lift your head sometimes, lift your head with joy and look at the worst and say, "If God", If this great God is for me, who can be against me? Why, heaven cannot be against me, myself, my sins cannot be against me, When He is lifted up as the blessed surety, a Mediator between God and the soul. But I must leave it.

Amen.

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