

Sermon preached by Mr F. L. Gosden on Lord's Day evening, Nov. 8, 1959  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton.

Text: Romans viii. 28

I have thought this afternoon of the importance of this calling to which the text refers, and I have felt sad to reflect on how I failed in trying to speak of it. For it may be that there are some people here who want some real evidence and confirmation that they are called by sovereign grace. And as enabled I would try and speak a few more things concerning this calling, and come to simple experience, for real vital experience has a sweet, majestic, simplicity in it. Now those of you who have a real concern, do you remember when things were different with you from what they now are? Do you remember when you were deaf to the Gospel? You may have heard a man talking in the pulpit, but it concerned you not at all; you neither heard nor wanted to hear the Gospel. Your heart was closed, your ears were deaf. Is it different now? Can you trace just that difference? You may be tried because you don't remember the date and the day, or anything conspicuous with respect to a beginning. But do you realise that there is something taken place in your experience whereby now you listen to the Gospel? You take the case of Lydia. Her heart was opened that she attended to the things that were spoken. The Lord opened her heart. Have you that evidence? Have you a heart that is brought to feel your need of what the Scriptures declare? Have you a heart that you receive the Lord Jesus if you could, would love Him if you could? Have you this difference, that you need the things declared in the Gospel? As there is set before you the Lord Jesus, the Redeemer, the Mediator, is there a connection with your sense of sinnership that you need such a Redeemer, such a Saviour? And do you feel to desire and wish that you possessed that Lord, wish you knew the truth? Do you feel that there is a secret in vital religion that the Lord's people know, that you pray the Lord might reveal to you? Oh what a difference! I feel warranted to say that as far as you have gone, that is an evidence of being called by grace.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called." Another thing. Do you remember the time when you never prayed? And has there now come a time when you are compelled to turn aside in secret and seek the Lord? Are you a stranger to the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"? Have you surveyed the whole world and can truly say that you can find neither rest nor satisfaction here below, and have bowed your knee at the throne of grace and prayed with Jabez, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!?" Do you realise that the Lord's people are a peculiar people and are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ, that you pray, "Lord, remember me with those same favours"? Now if this is going on in your heart, it is an evidence that you are called by grace.

I think we mentioned a few of these points lately here in speaking of that word in Jeremiah, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Have you had your direction changed?

Is the world behind your back? If it is, then your face is Zionward, Godward. And I believe that we concluded this morning by referring to that – that you are safe if you are Godward. Oh, I have felt the need of that lately, to be kept Godward! To turn away from God is very solemn. Oh it is the beginning of apostasy! Judas went out from that sacred conclave where the Lord Jesus was with His disciples; but he went out, and it was night. Ahithophel came to a terrible end, and yet he went to the temple with David, and they took counsel together. Oh may the Lord keep us well exercised, and keep us toward Himself, and toward Zion and the things of God!

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” It is very sacred to be conscious of this inward calling in the days of our youth. And it will have this in it, that calling will have a drawing. I believe our opening hymn this morning referred to that. Oh, in coming to this house of God, do you come now differently from what once you came? “With joy they hastened to the place, Where they their Saviour oft have met.” Oh the attraction, the sweetness of it, to feel that inward, living, intense desire, together with a deep need of that provision God has promised to bless in His house, and to really feel to breathe a heavenly atmosphere when you get inside! It is an effect of being called by grace. These are the secrets of the Lord, things hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.

To be called by grace is the influence of being born again. It is the influence of eternal life in the soul. All experience is the life of God asserting itself under the power of the Spirit. You think of it. I believe it is a true statement, and I make it from my little experience of it. It is a point that I am thankful to feel, that all experience which makes up that effectual calling by grace, and all that a sinner is called from, all the blessed riches of grace that he is called to in experience, is the life of God moving the soul after God and His living things. Now do you feel that inward movement? Sometimes you might feel such a living response of faith in your heart, not so much to what you possess, but as to what you are after. And the Lord Jesus, His glorious kingdom, His heavenly light so shines before you that you feel the arms of your faith reaching and stretching out toward Him. Do you know anything of that? If you do, you are called by grace. “We know that all things work together for good to them that are called.”

And it is according to His purpose, this experience, these inward living motions of the Spirit, and He only moves where He has communicated light and life; and if you are conscious of this inward work, it is because you are in the covenant of grace; it is according to His purpose. Oh it is a great thing, a very sacred thing, to have any evidence that we are given union unto the Lord Jesus, and therefore are connected with the eternal purposes of God!

But we would now come, as enabled, to this declaration: “We know that all things work together for good to” these people. This refers for the most part to things that are trying. We have no need for the Lord to comfort us with respect to things that are favourable. But this is for the comfort of those that are in conflict and distress, and

for this reason I read the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm. Oh that blessed Psalm! You see the text exemplified in that Psalm. If you take trouble, tribulation, distress, disasters, dangers, tempests, sickness, out of that Psalm, what would there be left? And do you think they would have got on better without them? An aeroplane always takes off against the wind. The same with a kite. It would be useless to try to get a kite to fly in running with the wind. You would never do it. You must pull the kite against the wind. It is the resistance that lifts the aeroplane and the kite. And when you see a kite in a windy day struggling as though if it could only break loose, it would soar up to the heavens; yet if it did, it would simply flutter to the ground. So what keeps the kite down, keeps it up, and it is necessary to pull it again against the wind. Now some of you may see this to be an interpretation of your own case, and of the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm. They were all against the wind, the resistance, the exercise. "And we know that all things work together for good" – and all things without exception. It is not all things except some particular trouble you have got; it is all things. There is a completeness in the whole of the work of salvation and in the work of the Spirit, and there will be a completeness in bringing His people safely through all the changing scenes of life. We commenced this morning to speak about the worst thing. All things shall work together for good, and the worst thing we can speak about is sin.

We would not say, "Let us sin that grace may abound; God forbid." But I have been thankful to feel, and even this afternoon in the midst of all my conflict, I have been thankful to feel that sin is among the "all things" that shall work together for good. We tried to show how that comes about. Indeed it is a mystery that the whole of the good of the Gospel, and the whole of the condescension of the Lord Jesus, His incarnation, the whole of it has respect to sin. And as we have sometimes said, so we would again repeat, that the offices that the Lord Jesus condescended to assume, and all the relationships that he has assumed to His people, would be meaningless if it were not for sin. It is a mystery. We should not have the Bible if it were not for sin. There would be no church of God, the Lord Jesus would never have come to this world. If sin had never entered into the world, then the nearest relationship that man would then have had to God would be that of the creature to the Creator. A sinless creature, but the relationship would be far different from what it is in redemption. Oh redemption has raised His people infinitely higher than that relationship that God had to Adam in the creation! It is a wonderful mystery to trace out how, in the wisdom and goodness of God, He has caused sin to work together for good and for his highest glory. In the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, vindicating the perfections of Jehovah, the justice, the holiness, the glory of God, oh sin is among those all things that work together for good! And so you will find it. Oh to be convinced of sin, and for the Holy Spirit to work in the heart godly sorrow and repentance! We shall find that it will work for good, and we shall know that good when that peace through His precious blood which passeth all understanding flows into our consciences.

But then all the changes in experience work for good. You take Jeremiah and the opening verses of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Lamentations. You could hardly think that those things could work for good. "He hath brought me into darkness and not into light. He hath made my chain heavy. He has hedged up my path with hewn stones .... forgot prosperity." All work together for good, and it worked for good to Jeremiah, that, looking back he said, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." He saw that those dealings with him were such as preserved him from self-destruction, from wandering from the Lord; they worked together for good. Perhaps you think you would get on a lot better, and your profession would be much more fruitful, and you would attain to a greater degree of experience, if things were not with you as they are. Oh, my friends, what a blessed record we have throughout the Scriptures of sanctified trial and affliction, losses and crosses, and conflicts from Genesis to Revelation. And some of you have felt it to be so. I foolishly think at time that if I had not the pains in my eyes and head, and infirmities, if I had a good memory and could go into the pulpit full of confidence, I should get on a lot better. And you, as Paul, may have a secret thorn. He thought he would do better without it, and asked the Lord three times for it to be removed. It is natural. You may be seeking for the Lord to remove some pain, some obstacle, some enemy, some grief, and think you would get on much better if He did; but you would not. It is a lifelong lesson to learn what Hezekiah learned: "By these things men live" (). I am sure they do. Oh it keeps you exercised, troubled, and anxious, near to the refuge and the throne of grace. The Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." Oh said Paul, "Then I would rather than lose the thorn and lose the influence of that grace – I would rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of the Lord might rest upon me."

You may think that to be brought into darkness cannot work for good. Oh what a precious Psalm is the 107<sup>th</sup>! You trace their pathway. They were in trouble from beginning to end, and "whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." Ah we may think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us. I am certain of this, that if we were allowed to have our own way, and to map out our own life, we should have no trouble, no pain, no loss, and no cross. Should we be better for it? Oh how insipid, how spineless, how flabby would our religion be! I feel persuaded of the truth, that by these things men live, and in all these things is the life, the exercise, of my spirit. And when we pray, "Let my soul live," we may very truly be praying for trial.

"And we know that all things work together for good." One of the most trying things – at least as I feel it – is the Lord's silence. There is a terror in it: "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me, I become like those that go down into the pit." Well, there are three reasons why God is silent. One of them may we never know. It is a fatal silence. The wicked, the reprobate, He never speaks to – never; and that is solemn. If we never hear His voice, it is a very solemn evidence of reprobation. Oh may we never, never know that silence! But there are two other kinds of silence that

the Lord observes to His people. One is for the trial of their faith. An outstanding example of this we have in the Syrophenician woman, who came in much trouble to the Lord Jesus, but He answered her not a word. Why did He treat her like that? If I might refer back, we said at the beginning of this point that faith is strengthened and rises against the opposition of things, the resistance; and the Lord was trying that woman's faith. He answered her not a word. We may know what that silence is. And she was in great family trouble. And you will find family trouble will work together for good. Her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. It must have been a trying case to have a daughter grievously vexed with a devil. And then in addition, the disciples said, "Send her away, she crieth after us." They insinuated that she had a base motive. But then the Lord said, "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And when that dear woman heard about lost sheep, she heard, "That is me, a lost sheep." So it gave her courage to speak, and she came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he called her a dog: "It is not meet to give the children's bread to anybody like you." Work for good. Why did not the Lord heal her daughter immediately without putting her to this trouble and anxiety? Does it interpret your cases? Oh in these things is the life of our soul; it was the life of that woman. "Truth, Lord." She was not offended. Oh how easily people are offended today! Would we put up with it? "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." We know all things, even the Lord's silence.

But then in the third place, He is sometimes silent for correction, discipline, chastening. He was to Ephraim: "Let him alone; he is joined to his idols." That is a solemn silence, but it will work for good. Yes, and do you wonder whether the Lord's silence to you is fatal, and that you have that evidence of reprobation. Well, I feel warranted to say this for your comfort. Take notice that if the Lord is silent to you, are you silent to Him? That is the point. He was silent to David, and he said, "Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my rock, be not silent to me." Now if a silent God so exercises your soul and brings about an anxiety, that you are forced to cry unto Him, there is hope for you concerning this thing. It will work together for good.

There will be this good thing too. It may be that before you listened to everybody else but God. My friends, we can settle down upon the verdict and opinion of our fellow-men. But the Lord will not have it. It is astonishing how we can walk in an ungracious complacency of what other people think of it, and where that is so, the Lord may be silent, and you will find a terror. It is not long since that I was compelled to say in secret with Jeremiah, "Be not a terror unto me; thou art my help in the day of evil." Oh my friends, that silence will eventually work together for your good, cut you off from listening to man, and you will say: "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence." You will seek rather that blessedness: "Blessed is the man that heareth Me."

"We know that all things work together for good." And so in providential things, and there is a secret running through everyone of them, and it is this. David said - he

had much trouble, family trouble, trouble in his kingdom, constant warfare, but the greatest trouble that David had in providence was his son Absalom. But he said, looking at these things, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure"; and these things are exactly the same things as in the text. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure. Oh believer, oh seeking trembling sinner, whatever your case may be, whatever distress you are in, whatever family trouble may be your lot, the covenant is ordered in them all, the sure mercies of David, and they will eventually work for your good.

We were singing, "God moves in a mysterious way." He has a sovereign way, because He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." Well, these things are teaching to profit; you get profit out of them. Looking back at my little lifetime, I feel that what little profit I have has been brought from these things. They work together. "Therefore tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." Oh it is very blessed to see things thus working together for our good! It will help you to bear them.

But Paul says "We know it." We don't just read about it in the Bible, hear about it from the pulpit. We know it in experience. Oh my friends, then do look in your own case for some knowledge, even if it is but little! The blind man said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Is there anything you know as being taught by the Spirit? Lately we spoke of this - "Be it known unto you men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The preaching of forgiveness is of no use to us unless we know it, and this is a blessed fact, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose"; but it is of no use to us unless we know it. Well, how are we to know it? If we are among the pilgrims whom the Lord is leading forth by the right way, a difficult way, a thorny way, a waste howling wilderness, we shall be brought into similar places, we must look for it. "Could we see how all is right, Where were room for credence? But by faith, and not by sight, Christians yield obedience."

But there is something very blessed about it, and so Paul gathers up these things and says, "If God be for us," if the Lord Jesus was for us, if He came to save us, to redeem us, if He came to be our Substitute, our Surety, our Forerunner, if the covenant of grace is for us, who or what can be against us?" Oh, happy, notwithstanding the trials, happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?"

Ah, you say, if I am never manifested as one of them, I can see that they are happy blessed people! Oh that the Lord would make me one! I wish I could speak of it. I seem to fail. There is a glory of Christ in the Gospel which I cannot reach. But let us aim at it, my friends. However short we may come, keep your aim, never lower your aim, from that blessed prize, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And may everything that makes up our lives be directed in the fear of God to that one glorious end and object. Amen.