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Sermon preached by Mr. G.J. Collier of Linslade at the Anniversary Services at Jireh Chapel, Tenterden, on 20th May, 1981.

If the Lord may help me this evening, I will bring your thoughts to the 16th Psalm, the words that are found in the 11th verse:

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore".

According to the Title of this Psalm, which is Michtam of David, it is a golden psalm, and that means that, as gold represents divinity, it is a psalm that concerns primarily the glorious person of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a Messianic Psalm setting forth His performance, His place when He stood in the room of His people.

While this is primarily the interpretation of this psalm, there is another side. We shall try to deal with both. The other side is the experimental side which believers enjoy and receive under the good hand of God, to whom the Lord is pleased to show them the path of life. But to take no notice or regard of the greater, deeper significance of this word would be to violate really the great purpose of the divine Spirit in inspiring the word to be written.

When the Lord Jesus took that journey of seven miles from Jerusalem, or nearby Jerusalem, to the village of Emmaus, and on that journey did expound to those two disciples all the things in all the Scriptures concerning Himself, we may well wonder whether this psalm formed part of that most outstanding, wondrous, remarkable discourse. Never would there have been a sermon like it. The very man, the very one that was able to interpret was there in His risen power expounding to those two disciples all things concerning Himself. God, the Lord, does not always visit and bless a great congregation. Two souls were blessed that day with wonderful blessings by the Lord himself, the Lord of life and glory, and verily I believe this is a very precious, sacred psalm, because there are three divisions in it in respect to Christ, setting forth His wondrous performance on behalf of His people.

First of all we have His delight in His performance, and He speaks of this delight in the early part of the psalm. He says "My saints" - He speaks about the saints of God, the excellent of the earth - "in whom is all my delight" (v.3), and He places Himself in their position by calling on God. The word 'God' in the original is in the singular and that is very striking and significant. Our English language does not always bring out the full meaning of these wonderful words. But you see Christ, being the Son of God on earth, speaking to His Father in heaven, would not use a word in the Hebrew that would represent the Trinity, but He used the word 'El' which represents one God, and He says: "Preserve me, O God; for in Thee do I put my trust" (v 1). You may say, well, did the Lord Jesus really need to put His trust in God the Father? My dear friends, He was standing in His believing people's place, and He was performing on their behalf what they have to pass through, what they need in their own soul's experience. And He speaks of the delight He has in the performance of these things. He says: "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extended not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight". (v 2/3).

There is a passage in the 8th of Proverbs which comes to my mind, where it speaks there so wonderfully about the Lord Jesus. It says: "Then I was by him, as one brought up, with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men" (v 30/31) My dear friends, is it not a wonderful thing to reflect upon the precious Lord Jesus in His delights in coming, and suffering, and enduring and performing all that He did for His people's sake, as we were singing in that beautiful hymn just now. (Gadsbys 579) If you ever get a little entrance into that substance of the truth, you will have something

to satisfy your poor soul and to give you a real blessing.

"He delighteth". He set His face like a flint. Nothing could turn the dear Saviour from His purpose. Satan attempted it. Three times did he try to turn the dear Redeemer from His great purpose: "If Thou be the Son of God" (Matt. 5 v6). The pharisees and all men that came against Him tried hard to divert Him. One of the most awful statements ever falling from a human lip fell on one occasion - we have it in the 10th of John - "Thou art a Samaritan (John 8.48) He hath a devil, and is mad" (John 10.20). What an awful thing to say against the dear Son of God? And yet that came out of the human heart and out of human lips. We need not, we cannot, condemn, because in your heart and mine there is the same enmity, but for the grace of God. We are no better than they; we would have uttered the same if we had been left to wander into such dreadful depths. But He, the blessed Lord, set His face like a flint. He knew what He had to pass through, He turned not aside, He entered into every step, and He delighted to do the Father's will. "I come to do Thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40.8) "I delight to do thy will". That is the first division of this psalm.

Then the second is the singleness of purpose; that it reveals to us that the Lord Jesus Christ had singleness of purpose. He says here in the 7th verse: "I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel". That counsel was from all eternity; it was the plan of God for the salvation of His people. And that counsel the Lord Jesus Christ took to Himself, cherished it, carried it out to the very fullest extent, valued it beyond all measure, and He says: "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons", in the dark, solemn pathway that the Lord had to tread when here on earth among His own people in our nature, in the way of suffering, in that terrible state and condition of ignominy and shame. When these were night seasons with the dear Son of God, He said "My reins instruct me in the night seasons".

Then again He says: "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved". What a singleness of purpose these words reveal to us of the dear Redeemer. You see you and I cannot really fully enter into things like this; O we do come short, we have to recognize how we fail, and fall, and falter, and only as we are held up by the hand of God can we lay claim to anything. But He would say "I have set the LORD always before me". His Father's honour was always first in His esteem. The performance and pursuit of His glorious purpose was the first thing in the heart of the Lord Jesus. As I said just now, nothing else could deter Him from it. All the wiles and fury of hell could not take Him away from the great purpose that He had come to perform, or deter Him from pursuing the salvation of His people. This is the Son of God! This is our Lord! This is the one we hope our hearts, our confidence is placed in. This is the one who promises never to forsake His people. This is the one in whom all the promises of God are residing eternally. They are 'Yea' and 'Amen' in Him, and not one of them can fail. Why? Because He set the Lord always before Him!

And then the third great division - the anticipatory part of this psalm, which anticipates the glorious triumphs of His death. We see them in these words "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." You see the Lord Jesus is here in the psalm, in the language of the psalm, looking beyond His earthly performance to His triumphs; to His glorious resurrection; to the triumphs of His life and death over all the powers of evil. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell". That is in the grave to corrupt. The Almighty God would bring His dear Son through all this, and raise Him from the dead, and show by that resurrection He accepted all His performance on behalf of His people, and show that death had received its deadly blow, and also reveal that Satan, the mighty

arch-enemy of His people, was broken and destroyed. "Thou wilt not leave my spul in hell; neither shall thine Holy One see corruption". You see the anticipatory, forward look of the dear Redeemer to His resurrection, His triumphant death and resurrection, and then final ascension to the right hand of God.

And this last verse, the verse of our text, is I believe this; it is the Lord Jesus looking forward when on earth among His people, when undertaking on their behalf the work of their redemption and salvation. He sees beyond the glorious entrance into heaven. He sees that word being fulfilled in His case, that is in the 24th Psalm: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of Glory" (Ps. 24 v 9/10). Yes, He sees the triumphs of the work of His salvation. Can you follow Him? And He sees the right hand of God, the place that He has a right to occupy now because of His wondrous performance. All the doings and the dyings of the dear Redeemer have given Him the right to occupy the throne of God. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore".

We may well call it a 'golden' psalm. It is golden because it is all of Christ, and all of His great and glorious work. My dear friends, it is golden in your esteem if you are one of the Lord's own people. This gives the very groundwork of your salvation. Here you may see Him suffering, agonizing, struggling in the throes of death itself. Here you may see Him rising triumphant from the grave and over death, taking the very sting of death out of its very character and nature for all His people. Here you may see Him rising high up into the heavenly glory, ever living to receive all who come unto God by Him, to demand their acceptance and to intercede on their behalf. Christ our great High Priest!

Then let us come to the other side of this wonderful psalm, most especially our text in the 11th verse, and look at it from the believer's standpoint. As I said in the beginning, it has two interpretations. Firstly a glorious interpretation, where it is primarily concerning Christ. Secondly as it concerns His people, who are inseparable from Him. He will not be separated from them, and they will find all their interest, and all their hopes, and all their expectations, bound up in Him. One with Him they will be, both now and in eternity. What a wonderful mercy then, my friends, if today in coming to the Lord's House here, we find a new interest, or an awakened concern, for knowledge of our interest in Christ.

Now what are the things that this word brings before us? "Thou wilt show me the path of life". Now how did that refer to the Lord Jesus? You may say, surely He knew the path of life? Yes, but you see that the path that I have been tracing out, that path through Gethsamane, and through Gabbatha and Golgotha, and through the garden into the tomb, was a path that the Lord Jesus had experimentally to be shown. Not instructionally, He knew that path, but He knew also that His Father would show to Him the unfolding of it in due time, and in the fulness of time. How very different it is with the Lord's people. They need to be shown that path of life, not only experimentally, but instructionally, and by way of revelation.

They begin without knowing where it is, what it is, where to find it, or even if it is needful to find it. We look back, some of us here tonight, we think of the time when we had no thought whatsoever for walking in a path, or seeking a path, or even believing there was a path in which the people were to walk, and find that it was a path of life. We had no interest, no concern, no vestige of thought that we were ever desirous of walking in or finding such a path as this. Now this language is very sweet and precious "Thou wilt show me the path of life". This is a poor soul who has come to realize that they are out of the way, they know not where to find the way, like dear Thomas, who said: "Lord wilt thou show us

the way" and "How can we know the way" (John 14. 5). The Lord said to him "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14. 6) "I am the way!" But a poor believer, a seeker, they know nothing as to where the path begins, or what its features are if they should ever find it, or what the experience would be if they ever walk in it; they are totally and completely at a loss to know whether they will be ever found in this path of life. But here is a great word, a word of promise, a word of hope, a word of sweet assurance and comfort: "Thou wilt show me the path of life".

Now let us look at this path for a moment or two this evening. First of all, I have already indicated that this path is Christ; Christ from the beginning to the end of it, and if we find Him we find the path of life. Sometimes a poor soul is found walking in this path without being really conscious of the fact. They simply realize this, that they are in deep need, they are totally ignorant, blind, they cannot feel their way or find their way. And then they find themselves feeling wonderfully led by a way that they know not and into steps that they can never have traced or believed it possible for them ever to have walked in; and then they say with amazement to the Lord: Is this the way? Is this the way? The way that leads from banishment to life eternal; the way that no fowl knoweth, no mighty intellect can ever discover; no power of reason can ever find out the way that can only be found and discovered by the revealings of God to the soul, and by the teaching of the divine Spirit. Every step of this pathway is divinely appointed and revealed; it is a way of experience; it is a way of communication; it is a way of revelation, and Christ is the very essence, the fulness, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega.

But what kind of a way is it? Well, the Word of God tells us very plainly that it is a rough and thorny road. You say, that is a contradiction, is it not? To say that Christ is the way from beginning to end, and yet it is a rough and thorny road? How can we put these things right? You will find a great many people today, you young people I will tell you this, a good many people today will falsely lead you in this matter, this important matter of finding the way of salvation, and the way to Christ. They will tell you if you only do certain things, make a certain decision, you will find that the way is smooth, easy, blessed, full of joy, full of everything you desire in your own heart, and no trouble whatever. There could be nothing more deceptive in all the world than false teaching, false guidance and false teachers. They are blind, and blind leaders will only lead into the ditch. Beware of them, my dear young people, follow the Word of God. The Word of God will trace out for you, and lay out very clearly the hallmarks of the way of salvation, the way of life, and you will see this as others are traced out walking in it, that it is a path of hills and valleys. There are rocks and crevices and pitfalls and swamps and all kinds of adversity and lions on the way, but you will get through, you will come at last to the end of it triumphant. It is a way of life.

"Thou wilt show me the path of life". Not the path of disappointment, not the way of ultimate ruin, disaster, the way of life. Life that is real; life that is full, life that is glorious in Christ, brought about by His mightiness and power and sovereign goodness in the experience of His people. It is a rough and thorny road, but this is the way every saint of God has had to walk. Some will find it rougher than others. It all depends what you need. Some of us need a good deal of rough treatment, you know, to bring us, to knock off those rough edges. I know, looking into my own heart, I know there is a great deal of need for such a path as this. If I had a smooth, easy path, I should become indifferent to the needs of God's people, I should not know how to speak from the Word of God to help a poor tried believer when they were being tempted by Satan, and tried by their own heart and conscience, buffeted here and there by circumstances that were seemingly all against them, and contrary to them. I said if I had a smooth, easy path I should

never be of any avail whatever to the really tried, tempted, troubled family of God. The Lord knows how to deal with His people to bring out the choicest from real experience of bitterness, the Lord can turn what is bitter into sweet. You may try to do it, but you will never succeed. The Lord knows how to mix our troubles, and to balance them in His scales, and sometimes you and I think that He has loaded us with too much on one side and not enough on the other. But you will find this, especially when you come to this place of which our text speaks, you will find this, that everything has been measured in infinite wisdom and infinite love, and not an ounce too much or too little is ever meted out to the people of God. O what a God we have! This is the path of life; this is the mysterious way that the world knows nothing of; this is why the world cannot understand the people of God, they think they are fools; they think they are following an empty sham. They know nothing of the preciousness, the sacred sweetness, the secret something that sweetens every bitter cup that is the portion of the believing people of God. They know nothing of that, as one says:

Boast not, ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes;
Above your highest mirth,
Our saddest hours we prize;
For though our cup seems filled with gall,

There's something secret sweetens all. (Gadsbys 307)

Because there is something secret sweetening every bitter thing. What is that sweetness? It is the love of Christ. When you find that you walk with One who walked a deeper, a harder, more bitter path than yours, you find your troubles are made very light, very light compared with His.

"Thou wilt show me the path of life". Now what are the ingredients in this path? What are needed in it? Well, my friends, we need one thing certainly, and that is faith, walking by faith not by sight. We want to walk by sight, but the Lord has forbidden it. That is one thing that He bars. None of His children can walk by sight the way that leads to heaven; they must walk by faith. O, you say, I hardly can hope to get very far because my faith is very weak. Yes, a little faith is a wonderful thing. It will triumph over death; it will triumph over the devil; it will reach where nothing else will reach; it can reach the end of the path of life. - Faith in Christ! O, you will have to pray often, give me faith, Lord! Faith to go out; faith to continue today and tomorrow; faith to meet this subversive thing in the pathway and to overcome it; faith to humble myself at the footstool of the Lord in true repentance and confession of sin; faith to look to the blessed Jesus and His redeeming love and blood as a remedy for all my woes, and the cure of all my sins. That is the kind of faith we want, and when the Lord shows you the path of life He will show you what faith is, because He will give it. He does not say to His people, now what you want is faith, then leave them to find it or go somewhere else to look for it. He gives it! The first blessed uprising beam of faith is a most wonderful thing. It entwines itself around a precious Christ, and looks at Him alone, and ponders His steps, and waits around the very footstool of His throne of grace for guidance, for leading, for empowering, for enabling strength.

Another thing we need in this path of life is courage. O, how much we do need courage! When Moses died and Joshua, a youngish man, feeling himself totally unsuited and unfit for the great task of leading the Children of Israel into the land of promise, he thought everything was done and finished and gone because Moses was dead. The Lord comes to him and He says this: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan" (Josh, 1.2) and "Be of good courage and strengthen thine heart" (Josh 1.9) "Be of good courage". When the dear Lord comes to us with a word, and sometimes in our times of dejection and weakness, and He virtually says to us: "Soul be of good courage, I am thy God!

Have my promises ever failed? Have you ever found that I have not been as good as my word? "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Ps. 27.14). Yes, we need courage in this path of life.

And again - I must hasten - we need strength, strength to endure unto the end. That is what I want. I hope I have been in the path of life and know something of it. It is many years now since I felt the Lord lay His hand of mercy and power upon me. Although all the failings and sins, shortcomings indeed, and departings have been so great, so grievous, I hope I am in the way. And I believe this, that the Lord will not leave me, but will give me triumphant victory over self and sin at the end. There will be an end, you know, to the path. It is a path of life, it is not a pathway where death is at the end of it, what is at the end of the pathway to every believer is life. Take that to heart, my dear friends, if you fear and dread death. Well then, remember this, the path the Lord shows to His people it is a path of life. When John Gosden was dying I went to see him. He said to me I do not fear death, but I do fear dying, but he did not fear death because he knew there was this, there was life.

But now we must come to this second point in our text: "In my presence is fulness of joy". O, we were reading tonight how dear Moses, when he was contemplating leading the Children of Israel through the wilderness, there was one thing he needed, that was the presence of God. "Let thy presence go with us, and if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33.14). Is the presence of the Lord of vital value to you? Do you come to the House of Prayer looking for it, waiting for it, longing for it? Are you content if you find it not, if there are no signs or evidences in your own bosom that the Lord is with you? Do you feel the presence of the Lord a necessity in every step you take, and in every way?

In thy presence I am happy

In thy presence I'm secure

In thy presence all afflictions

I can easily endure

(Gadsbys 1101)

That is a wonderful truth, is it not? O, we are poor things without the presence of the Lord. We are mighty things in the presence of the Lord. Look at those characters in the Word of God. Alone they were totally weak and insufficient, but with the Lord, Gideon and others that are recorded in the Word, with God's presence, they were all mighty, conquering, all powerful souls, overcoming their enemies.

"In thy presence". Now there are two things where the presence of the Lord will be all-essential in your experience. One is this, it will bring you rest, rest of spirit, rest of faith and all that that entails, confidence, assurance, comfort, rest. O, there is a rest that remaineth for the people of God, this is by the presence of the Lord.

The other thing is joy. "The joy of the Lord is thy strength" (Nehemiah 8.10). That was spoken by Nehemiah and others on that great day when there was a mighty revival in the land of Israel in the days of Nehemiah. He says: "The joy of the Lord is your strength". Well, where does real joy come from? That is a question we have to ask. What gives us solid satisfaction and comfort? A good many people get it from false religion, temporary comfort. They get certain kinds of joy, but it is not lasting joy, not real joy, it is soon evaporated and vanishing. But the presence of the Lord communicated to His people gives a lasting joy to their souls. Christ said, you know: "Ye now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your sorrow shall be taken away, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16.22). There is joy in the presence of God.

Then "At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore". I think, you know, we ministers do not preach enough about heaven. It is almost an apology today to talk about heaven, as if we ought not to bring the subject up. You should never bring such a subject before the people, some say. Why not? Where do we hope to meet? Where do we hope the end of the work of grace will finally land us? Where do we expect to find the presence of the Lord? At the right hand of God where the Man of the right hand of God sits in glory and wonder, and light and ever expanding wonder, preciousness. We do want to think of death, some of us may be near it. We want to be really, truly prepared for it. It is a reality, my friends, there are saints of God in heaven who all their lifetime were the subjects of bondage through fear of death, but when they came to pass through the river they found the dreaded menace had vanished. Bunyan in his works has a character whom he depicts as passing over Jordan, that those waters were never so shallow as when Mr. Fearing went through.

"But at thy right Hand there are pleasures for evermore". Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. Our text sums up this glorious truth: "At Thy right Hand there are pleasures for evermore". Christ, the risen now glorified Lord is at God's right hand, and there the saints will find all their pleasure contained.

May God bless His word.

Amen