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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham on
Sunday morning 10.8.75

Hymns 727, 412, 158

Reading 1 John 2.

Text 1 John 2.27 (first clause)

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in
you"

John's Epistles have three striking features and one of these relates to the Person of Christ to Whom he directs us in a particular way and impresses upon us the importance of it. It is just as important now as it has ever been, and probably more important when we consider the tendency to drift into generalities in religion. I feel it upon me to impress the importance of this, to have in some measure at least an understanding in a knowledge of the Person of Christ. This was the life that was manifested and John said, "We have seen it and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us". There is an anointing then.

Another point referred to by John is the love of God. He seems to bring forth this particular feature, indicating that it is an evidence of the reality of our religion, for he affirms that, "He that loveth not knoweth not God". If we measure our experience by this we may find it to be a searching point, but it is very sweet to feel that love shed abroad in the heart so that the bondage is removed and a sweet and blessed view by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ fills the heart and a waiting soul receives Him and feels as it is in the Canticles, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste".

Here the Apostle refers to some anointing. This matter of anointing can be referred to in three particular aspects. First of all in regard to the Levitical law under which, as you know, there was anointing of the priest and the anointing of everything sacred was a ceremonial that has, from that point of view been cast away; it has had its fulfilment in the glorious resurrection of Christ and His finished work. We are under the Gospel, under the influence of

the Gospel, under its teaching in our souls, and that is what the anointing of the Spirit really is; it is that unctuous teaching of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a child of God. It is profoundly sweet to feel a little of it; it warms the heart, softens the spirit, removes objections and questions; Christ becomes precious to you, His Word is attractive, eternal realities are vital. This can be a gracious preparation; it can keep the soul alive under circumstances of trouble and affliction and distress. It is the Holy Spirit's gracious unction in its softening influence to a child of God; it is productive of confession of sin. You will never get lower than when you feel Christ's love shed abroad in your heart. What a humbling effect it has! Unworthy me, you will say, -

"Why was I made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?" (440)

What choice have you made? I believe I can answer for you. You will say, as the hymnwriter has it (although they have altered it)

"Loved of my God for him again
With love intense I'd burn,
Chosen of thee ere time began
I choose thee in return". (940)

My pastor used to say "It is quite right to say you choose Him, because it is the choice of faith and the effect of love and a knowledge of Him so that your choice of Him in your heart is an evidence of your love to Him and union with Him.

"The anointing!" Is this not the Gospel to which the Apostle refers in this chapter? It is the work of the Holy Spirit revealing Christ, making Him precious, softening the heart, bringing a gracious compunction, confession of sin and unworthiness and yet of love to Him Who loved you with an everlasting love. It is an anointing that is typified by the ceremonial anointing under the Old Testament; but this anointing is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you", that is to say it is not an anointing to be forgotten about and fade away, but something that abides. In another Scripture

the Apostle says, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". That beginning a good work is an anointing, it is the beginning of the work of grace in the heart, a divine quickening and the conviction of sin. Oh how precious it is, and it has this particular feature in it, a confession of sin. If there is no confession there is not much evidence of the anointing; but the anointing is productive of confession. This is worship; and it is sweet when the two parties come together, and as my pastor used to say, you may raise all your objections and He will take no notice of them, He will come and fill your heart and fill your soul with joy and peace in believing; and this is a blessed anointing.

Do you feel that you know anything about this anointing referred to here? Do you feel that you have received it? Well, say you, I do not know - but you will know because it is in a softening of the heart, a gracious compunction, a feeling sense of unworthiness, a spirit of worship in your heart. Your soul is drawn to Him, you are favoured to sit under the apple tree, and you are brought into His banqueting house; His banner over you is love. The Apostle's point is that it abides; it is not given and taken away to have no more effect or issue; the anointing is not the ceremonial anointing, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Where He begins it He will not change His mind or forsake it. More or less this anointing follows through your spiritual experience, it abides in you, not always in the sweet feeling of it, but in the purpose, design and effect of it; that is to say, if once the love of Christ be shed abroad in your heart, then nothing can eradicate it or take it away; it ABIDES.

Another feature of this anointing is a feeling sense of access in prayer before the Lord. I wonder if you have felt it. I mean here particularly in secret, not so much in public, but in secret, when, although perhaps it may not be very often, you have felt a sweet drawing to the Lord in prayer; there has been a little anointing. Is not that very precious? "The anointing which ye have received". The anointing consists also in the Spirit revealing Christ, as it is

said of Him by the Lord, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you". That is a sweet anointing, you cannot have a better than this, that the good Spirit of the Lord makes Christ precious in the heart. "He shall receive of mine", that is all these spiritual blessings that Christ is exalted to give. This is real religion.

"The anointing which ye have received of him", - some of you I know can follow me, and others may wish you could perhaps, but it is a point of experience, a sweet softening in your heart, a little compunction, a little melting down, a little drawing near, getting hold of Christ, feeling His precious love and blood so that you cannot, as it were, take any refusal. It is a sweet anointing. Sometimes this can be in reading the Scriptures, in a prayerful reading of the Scriptures; something may come into your heart when a sweet feeling softens you and brings you down; this is a little anointing. Do you get a little of this sometimes? It is the Holy Spirit's work in the heart, and very precious it is. It may be said of the Holy Spirit that His work in the heart is three fold. It is to quicken into life, to convince of sin and to reveal Christ. "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". It is also His blessed work to prepare His people for everlasting glory. It is a preparation, a sweet and blessed preparation. If you feel Him precious in your heart, or if you feel a little of this anointing, it will take away the sting of death and remove the terror that you might have felt of that last river that you must cross, and sometimes, it may be many gloomy forebodings. I think of this quite a lot in the night time and seek for a token for good. "Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed" - that is those things that are hateful to your faith and love, for our old nature rises up and brings a conflict and confusion; but still the anointing abides.

The Spirit of God does not begin a work and forsake it, it abides, to preserve from error. What is there that is more conducive to keeping us watchful and prayerful against errors that abound than

this anointing? It preserves from error, keeps you tender, watchful, wakeful, lively, prayerful; and all these things are like to an anointing upon your spirit. I know some of you can understand me. Here and there when you have been quietly reading something has been made rather sweet; perhaps some particular verse or promise, or something that you may have lighted upon, has been made precious, softened your heart a little and there has been a little of this anointing. Oh what a sweet anointing it is. It is not something that you can manufacture yourself.

"The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you". You have received it of Him; you will know in your own experience how true this is because we have to be brought down to feel that we cannot produce anything good of ourselves; everything of a gracious, spiritual, saving nature must be received of Him. You will feel it too by its effect. This anointing brings a spirit of discernment. "Believe not every spirit" says the Apostle, "because many false prophets are gone out into the world". Some people, as an old minister said, are like dogs that can swallow anything, but the Lord's people have a spirit of discernment in their heart between truth and error; they cannot swallow everything. It brings a spirit of gracious discernment, not of spiritual pride, a humbling of oneself before the Lord under a sense of a need of His mercy. Have you got this, may I ask, to make some application, have you known something of this? Has there been an occasion when in your attempts to pray you have felt a sweet drawing forth unto the Lord? Has there been an occasion when you have been reading and something has come in with that unction, or when you have been walking the street perhaps or engaged in other matters, your heart may have been taken up and you have had a sweet moment. It may not have raised you to a hope, or it may have; you may have received a hope before and this has been a sweet reviving of it. "The anointing which ye have received of him". This is a preparation in the experiences of the Lord's people, as sometimes we have read of godly people who, as they have come to the end of their pilgrimage have been very favoured, although perhaps it may have been a season of darkness before; but before they are

taken the light has shone into their souls, their darkness and fears have fled away, Christ has been made precious and they have left all to see Him without a veil between.

This anointing can be a support to the Lord's people in the path the Lord has appointed them, in their trials. Is not that often the case? It is in a time of trial, in some difficulty, in some painful thing, in some hard thing or it may be some bitter thing; perhaps someone has turned against you or shown an unkind spirit - all kinds of things come into the lives of the Lord's people. But what does it do in your case? Why, say you, I have to take them to the Lord, I have to take an enemy to the Lord, I have to take a friend to the Lord, I may have to take His people or someone dear to me to the Lord; and you wait upon Him and feel a softening in your heart and a little drawing forth unto Him. This is the anointing, then. O what a need there is of this grace, what a need there is of this anointing! You feel dried up, hard, cold, barren, not able to produce anything spiritual of yourself, such a poor, cold, dead thing. If you get like that, what you need is a little of this anointing of the Holy Spirit, something brought in, a particular word or promise applied to your need and your case. O how precious it is! Some of you may say I do not know much about this, but I know what a path of trouble and sorrow and grief is. This is where you need this anointing then, a support, comfort, strength; it can be quieting, enabling you to cast your care upon Him.

"The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you". This does not mean that we are always in a good place enjoying communion and not having any conflict or hard labour to keep going; but it means that, where the Lord has begun His precious work in your soul and implanted His fear there, He will never forsake it; and however low you may sink, it will not be too low for Him; however difficult your path it will not be too difficult for Him to come to you and favour you with a Word to hold you up and bear you along until He is pleased to bring some deliverance. This anointing then abides to support the Lord's people under the temptations that may assail them. We may know something about that roaring lion who goeth about

seeking whom he may devour, but he will never devour one in whose heart is a little of this anointing. Whatever is the work of the Lord in your heart it will abide there until you enter heaven to enjoy it in its fulness, not just a sip from the river but to bathe in the ocean of everlasting love, to go no more out.

"The anointing which ye have received of him". What a wonderful mercy it is to have something real in our souls, not just a mere formality, but something real in our souls, something that has come from heaven. Real religion must come from heaven and it must take us to heaven. If it comes from heaven it will abide in the heart and no devil will be able to turn it out. Have I said anything that has touched a spot, come to the point, entered into your path, described your feelings? In the world ye shall have tribulation, and many have had bitter persecution. Many have sacrificed their lives for Christ's sake. But here we are not shut out of the Chapel by soldiers, we are favoured to meet together to worship the Lord according to our conscience and that is a privilege; but we shall need this anointing. Some of you may say, When I awoke this morning I had such a sweet feeling come into my heart that it was the Sabbath day and I had not to go to the office and spend a day in the toils of this life, you felt a little sweetness, a little anointing.

This anointing really consists in that communion that His people are favoured to feel with Him. What sweet moments they are! You cannot produce it yourself but you may try to pray for it, for the Lord to draw near and favour you with some sweet token of His love to you and shed it abroad in your heart; and when you get a touch of it what an anointing it is! I have known some of the Lord's people who have been favoured in their early days and when I have reminded them of it they have said, 'Yes, but that is such a long time ago'; but the anointing abides; He will not take it away if He begins with you. There may be many fears about a false standing, a false hope, a vain confidence. I do not believe the Lord's people do have a vain confidence or a false hope, though they may fear it; but they are kept waiting at the Lord's feet for Him to appear unto them. "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation".

Here is a timely word, it may be. The Apostle was writing to those who were very probably under some persecution or in some path of trouble or passing through some difficult and trying circumstances, but his chief point is the importance of a knowledge of Christ. He brings before them the Person of Christ in a beautiful and gracious way, and he refers to the love of God, "He that loveth not knoweth not God". What did the Lord say to His servant Jeremiah? "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". Everlasting love, in a call by grace, a quickening into life and effectually being brought to a knowledge of His Word and walking in His ways. "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you" - this is an expression of confidence that the Apostle John had in these little children, men, and fathers, as though he would say you have had an anointing and that anointing will be subjected to much opposition, conflict and trial; but if the Lord has begun it, it will abide in you. It is an unctuous, saving work of the Holy Ghost in the heart. He convicts of sin, reveals Christ and prepares a redeemed sinner for heaven by confirming him and granting him sweet touches of this heavenly anointing. How far away we get sometimes. So many things come into our lives that seem to swallow it up. We are so fully engaged, and that we quite understand; but it may be that the Lord has come, it has not separated us, the Lord has come into it and granted a sweet token of His love and a little anointing. How sweet it is; it brings a quietness in the heart. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength", He draws you to a precious Christ, makes Him unspeakably lovely, you stand under the apple tree, you are brought into the banqueting house, and as near to heaven as you can be while you are in this poor, frail tabernacle. What a mercy the Lord has made choice of a people unto everlasting life in His eternal decrees and He will have them to be with Him one day, everyone of them, as with the children of Israel, when they passed through Jordan, not a hoof was left behind; there was not just one poor thing who did not get through quickly enough and was drowned by

the flood; they all got safe over Jordan. Perhaps you say, that is too high for me, but I do long to feel something of it; I do long to feel this hard rock of my heart softened a little and to have a little, sweet communion with my best beloved. What is it makes you say 'best beloved'? Because you have had this anointing. What makes Him appear as the chief of ten thousand? Because you have had a little of this anointing. What is it that holds you and binds you to His truth as of more value than anything beside? What is it that makes His love precious in your heart when you are lively? It is the anointing that abides in you, with here and there a little sweet reviving, and you are brought up again and helped to press on a little longer and prove you have strength given equal to your day. You may say, I long to feel something of this, I am such a poor, desolate thing, so destitute. But they are poor, destitute people who pray, as in the Psalm we read about the prayer of the destitute and that the Lord will regard it. However Poor and weak and frail you may feel to be, wait on Him that He may give you a touch, a little help, some Word, something that may relieve your conflict and bring a little rest and quietness. That is what this anointing is. May the Lord help us and may we feel this to be true - "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you". Amen.

For additional copies please write to - 9 Sibella Road, SW4 6JA

Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Saturday evening 10.1.76

Hymns 640, 1045

Reading Romans 8 (1-10 and 34-39)

The Apostle is writing to a particular people, referred to in the first verse, of whom he could say, "There is no condemnation". No state or standing can be more blessed than this for they are a people who were appointed in the eternal purpose of God unto everlasting life, and the Lord is their God in their life and walk while here below, in their tribulations and afflictions, joys and sorrows and their destiny is a blessed one.

In the first verse the Apostle refers to them, but in the second verse he refers to his own personal case. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death". This is a wonderful thing. We may be able to see the blessedness of the redeemed of the Lord and their eternal safety and happiness but may have many questionings, doubts and fears about our own case. This may seem to hang upon an uncertainty as to what the ultimate issue may be, but this was not the case with the Apostle Paul - it "hath made me free", delivered me from all condemnation. What a blessed state to be in and to feel a personal hope of interest in the everlasting Gospel. These people, many of them, are now in glory, for there is no condemnation. If this can apply to you and me we shall be in heaven one day, joining the countless multitude whom no man can number. O beloved friends it is a mercy of mercies to have a hope in the Gospel and to feel it and to be able to say the law "hath made me free from the law of sin and death". This is followed up; it will affect the life and walk and conversation, for they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins". Formerly you walked according to the course of this world but now are made nigh by the blood of Christ. May it be true of every one of us, if the Lord will, that we come in the first verse and bear some evidence of it in our life, walk and conversation. We shall not be saved on the ground of our conduct as a foundation but we shall be saved, if we are, through the merit of a precious Christ Who loved us and gave Himself for us. O may the Lord mercifully grant it to us and bless our souls this night. Amen.