

A sermon preached by Mr J Delves at Oxford on September 8th 1958

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

One of the great mysteries and mercies of religion is the fact that a sinner may have contact with God, and that at a particular place which God has appointed, and where He has declared that He will meet with His people. God is an approachable God; although He fills heaven and earth, is everywhere, and is boundless, yet notwithstanding the majesty and glory of His being, He is an approachable God. If He were unapproachable there could be no hope for any of us, no gospel, no salvation, no life, no heaven, and this way of approach is revealed in the Scriptures as being in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. For, said the Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Lord Jesus is this throne of grace, typified by the mercy seat that covered the ark upon which were two cherubims looking one toward the other, that being the place where God said to Moses, after commanding him to make the mercy seat, "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee." What a wonderful mercy is this, and what a mercy or a guilty sinner to be allowed to venture there, and not only to venture there, but to be assured of acceptance there, too. For many Scriptures confirm the truth that He will never turn away those who come to Him in faith. "I am the Lord thy. God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

Here, then, is an exhortation to us, or rather an exhortation to sensible sinners, who have need of mercy and of grace, to exercised people, and here is the exhortation - "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." This word, 'therefore', is noticeable, because it has reference to the ground or reason upon which we may venture before God, and has its connection in the 14th verse, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession for we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." This being so, let us, therefore, because of this, or upon this ground, let us, therefore, come boldly - as though the .Apostle would say, 'This will give us a warrant to come boldly.' The ground then, lies in the priesthood of Christ - seeing then that we have a great High Priest, let us come boldly. Now the office of the high priest was to offer sacrifice and to intercede. This the great Redeemer has done and is doing. He offered Himself without spot to God; He made the greatest sacrifice that ever has been - He gave Himself for our sins and He died, rose again, and entered heaven with His own blood and is at the right hand of God to intercede on His people's behalf - not upon uncertain grounds; His presence in heaven is His intercession there and His good spirit in the heart is His intercession there, so that in His own blessed Person He intercedes in heaven and by His spirit He intercedes in the heart of a believer. "Let us therefore come boldly."

There is another point beside this, which consists in the particular feature or character of this High Priest and that relates to His sympathy. "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Let us therefore, because of this, because of the fact that He Himself is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, "let us therefore come boldly." This is a very beautiful consideration. It does not just

simply say of this High Priest that He is touched with our infirmities - though that is perfectly true - but it comes much closer than this; it says that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. This is a striking point. I wish we may understand that whatever His dear people feel in themselves in respect of their infirmities, the Lord Jesus Christ is touched with that feeling; He understands the feeling of our infirmities "and was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." His divine sympathy as Priest in the discharge of His office on His People's behalf constitutes a reason why by His grace' we may come boldly.

It may be noticeable that in this chapter we have a three-fold exhortation, as it were, in similar terms. In the first verse we have this: "Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." "Let us therefore fear." This is, a wholesome kind of fear, a spiritual fear, a fear lest after all we have made profession of we should come short at last, should be weighed in the balances and be found wanting, or be like the foolish virgins, who though they had lamps had no oil in them, or like those who have a form of godliness but who are destitute of its saving power. There may be a wholesome fear on this point. "Let us therefore fear." We had far better fear all our days than to rest in a false or vain confidence. It is very, very sweet to feel a gracious confidence, the confidence of faith, and when we are favoured with this we are exhorted not to cast it away. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which bath great recompense of reward." But the Lord's exercised people are fearful lest after all they should come short of that which is vital to, their soul's salvation, and often in secret they have to cry, "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation." "Let us therefore fear" lest after all our religion may prove to be just, as it were, an outward superficial affair without any root or reality.

Then there is another exhortation in verse 11. Not only does the Apostle say, "Let us therefore fear," but he also says, "Let us also labour" or "Let us labour therefore to enter into (this) rest." The point here can be seen - if we are really fearful lest we should come short and are exercised upon this point, we shall labour, that is, we shall labour before the Lord at His throne of grace to have matters made clear to us, that we may enter into that rest. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest", lest we fall-by the same example of unbelief as our fathers did in the wilderness. " If we are fearful lest we should come short of that rest, we shall labour that we may by the mercy of God be prepared to enter into it and not prove at last to be weighed in the balances, and found wanting.

The third, point is this, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." This is a labour for the most part. The labour consists in coming boldly .There are several things in this coming boldly unto the throne of grace. We are not to understand it as referring to any natural boldness, much less a presumptuous boldness, but the boldness here is the confidence of faith, as we have it in, a later chapter, "Having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." This coming boldly is coming in a full assurance of faith. Perhaps you say, 'Oh but that would cut me off because I do not feel to possess that faith; I am, in such confusion; I seem, as it were, to be just tempest tossed and assailed by unbelief.' Yes, that may be so, you may feel to be much in the dark about your personal interest, but the full assurance of faith here does not necessarily relate to the full assurance of faith as to one's interest, so much as the full assurance of faith in Christ; confidence in Him, looking to Him; believing on Him. Coming boldly, then, is coming with a true heart in full assurance of faith`- that is, faith in the Person and sacrifice and priest-hood of the Lord Jesus Christ, because we can never come acceptably to the throne of grace, much less

boldly, unless faith is in exercise, upon this glorious Person and upon all that He is in the salvation of our souls, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace."

But to come boldly has another feature. To come boldly is to ask for great things. The boldness is the confidence of faith in asking for great things:-

*Thou are coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much. (Gadsby's 379)*

Let us come boldly. And what greater thing can a poor sinner ask for than the mercy of God in the salvation of his soul. There is no greater thing we can ask - it will be worth more to us than if we were to possess the worth of the universe, for what would that be to us on a dying bed?

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The greatest blessing we can have is to be numbered among the redeemed family of God and the greatest thing we can ask for is to have an interest in the Lamb's redeeming love and blood. "Let us therefore come boldly" for this particular blessing - boldly, - to ask or great things.

"Let us come boldly" because of the need that is in us. What needy creatures we are! Sin has brought us into a state, of poverty, a state of death but if our souls are quickened into life, we shall feel our spiritual poverty - a painful experience, although a healthy one; every sensible sinner feels his need. All have needs but some are, by divine grace, made conscious of their needs; need becomes a real thing, a life and death matter in the soul which only God Himself can supply. "Let us come boldly" because of the poverty and need and sin that is in us.

"Let us come, boldly" because we are invited, to come. What a wonderful mercy this is for a guilty wretch! "Come unto me," said the Lord Jesus, "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In another place He says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." What a wonderful mercy to be a coming sinner, to be coming to the throne of grace. "Let us come boldly" because we are invited to come. But though we have this invitation, in our state of need, we have need of His grace to help us to venture with acceptance. Oh, sometimes it may be you feel you have just to groan out the prayer of the Syrophenician woman, 'Lord, help me;' Groan it out, sometimes, you may have to before the Lord and yet there may be more spiritual boldness in those three words than in many a lengthy well-addressed prayer. It is what comes out of the heart. Oh, what boldness there was with that woman in her distress and need. She came worshipping, saying, "Lord, help me." This is the kind of boldness! The heart is moved with divine power when this boldness is felt and becomes a real experience; you can feel the power of it in your soul when the Lord is pleased to grant it. This is spiritual boldness! In the case of that poor woman it was as though she poured out her heart before the Lord. "Lord, help me." This is the kind of, boldness. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." And was not that a gracious boldness that the dying thief had when he said, "Lord, remember me when Thou earnest into thy kingdom"? Was it not boldness that Jacob had when a

Man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day and he said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." And Jacob said, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Was not that a gracious boldness?

This boldness then is acceptable in the Lord's sight. This seems to be beautifully set forth in the parable of the importunate widow, who continually went before the judge to be avenged of her adversary. He would not for a while but eventually said, "Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The Lord said, "Shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." This coming boldly, then, is coming with gracious importunity. This is coming boldly.

*Lord, I cannot let Thee go,
'Till a blessing Thou bestow; (Gadsby's 376)*

Well, do you know anything about this boldness at the mercy seat? Have you been in some distress, in darkness and difficulty that has brought you to the throne of grace to say as from the bottom of your heart, "Lord, help me." Oh, it is a mercy for poor needy sinners that they have a God to come to, a God who not only understands their need but is able to supply that need. "Let us therefore come boldly." Do you know anything about this boldness? Have there been times with you when you have felt that power in your heart - that drawing power that the Lord refers to in the sixth chapter of John. "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." This is the boldness. Now at times you will be able to feel it in your soul's experience. I know there may be many sad times of bondage and darkness when one feels to have little, if any, access at the throne of grace, but there are times and seasons when the spirit of the Lord gives this boldness, and when the Father draws. There is a drawing power in this coming. We cannot otherwise come.

But there is something besides that. In this coming boldly to the throne of grace there is an evidence of divine election in Christ. Even in that same chapter the Lord says, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me." In this coming, then, where it is real and where this gracious boldness is felt by the Lord's mercy in the heart, when the soul is drawn to the throne of grace, there is an evidence of that divine choice and the gift of such a one to Christ. A remarkable thing, this, although we may not feel able to take it for ourselves unless the Lord is pleased to apply it but the truth is there. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." They come, and that is not all, "He that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Let us come boldly because we are invited thus to come, and not only because we are invited but because we are assured of success. "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no-wise cast out." Many Scriptures go to assure us of this. "They that seek shall find." "To him that knocketh it shall be opened." I will not turn him away, though that be what he deserves." "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." He says. How condescending on the part of the infinite God to say to poor finite creatures, sinners, "Come unto Me." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and, thou shalt glorify Me." Well, have there ever been times when you have felt this boldness? It is a particular experience.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace" not only because we are sure of success but let us come boldly because we have no one else to whom we can go. This is just how Peter felt when

he said to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." There is no-one else to whom we can go with our sins, burdens and difficulties to obtain relief and deliverance, health and strength, but to this God. He is an almighty God. He is above all our difficulties, weakness, fears, and all our sins. Let us therefore come boldly.

And here is another thought. Let us come boldly because the concerns of eternity are so vast and far-reaching; the issues are so tremendous; a destiny is before us either to eternal life and happiness or to eternal death and misery. Oh the tremendous issues of eternity! Let us come boldly to seek this God "that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" in our concerns, exercises, and distresses. Let us come boldly. 'Oh,' some may say, 'I wish I could.' But this is not a natural boldness. I believe that this boldness is the good Spirit's gift to one which enables him to come boldly. To come boldly is to pray in the Holy Ghost, as the Apostle Jude speaks "But ye, beloved, build up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." This is coming boldly. Oh, let us come boldly because of the tremendous issues that await us. Sometimes that word 'eternity' is a terrible one; our destiny must be an everlasting destiny. Let us come boldly. 'Oh,' one may say, 'can there be mercy for me?' Who has told you there is no mercy for you? That is in the hands of God. Is He not a God of mercy? If He were not, none of us would have any hope. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Let us come boldly because of the tremendous value of the soul. Oh, what can be compared to the soul's value? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" - be lost at last! What an awful contemplation! "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we, may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

How shall we obtain mercy? In the first place, because we have a great High Priest who is a Merciful and faithful High Priest, who dispenses mercy to coming sinners who come boldly and obtain it, in answer to prayer. This mercy is obtained then in answer to prayer. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy." Oh what a wonderful word is 'mercy' to a convinced sinner. Everything short of hell we receive by the mercy of God, because we deserve nothing but His wrath. We, have broken His holy law, brought ourselves under its terrible curse, and if we live and die there we shall suffer the awful penalty of a broken law in everlasting punishment, and if there were no mercy there would be no hope. Mercy is one of the sweetest words in our language. Mercy!

*Mercy is welcome news indeed
To those that guilty stand;
Wretches that feel what help they need
Will bless the helping hand. (Gadsby's 218)*

The gospel is full of mercy. Mercy, in this sense it outside of the law. Mercy is in the gospel. The law can but condemn us because we have broken it and if mercy is shown to us it must be by a free act of God outside of the law and this is where the blessed gospel comes in. The gospel is all mercy and everything that we receive we receive upon the ground of mercy. "That we may obtain mercy." What kind of mercy! Well, we need delivering mercy, to be delivered from the darkness and bondage, uncertainty, fear, and gloom that holds us as in a prison. The Psalmist prayed thus, "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy name." Ob, sweet mercy! Mercy flows through the blood

of Christ to poor sinners. The channel of mercy is a therefore at the throne of grace. The dear Saviour opened A. channel of mercy for sinners when He shed His blood, for by shedding His blood, He appeased Justice, paid the ransom price, removed the curse and, opened the channel of mercy for sinners. Oh, sometimes mercy has been a sweet word in my heart. One writes about this, saying:-

*'Twas Jesus, my friend, when He hung on the tree,
Who opened the channel of mercy for me. (Gadsby's 11)*

Mercy is great! Oh, to think of the mercy of. God toward a poor law-condemned sinner! "That we may obtain mercy" - delivering mercy - deliverance from the claims of the law that holds us in its fetters and pronounces its curse upon us. And pardoning mercy, too! Mercy is divine compassion for miserable people who are helpless in themselves. Oh, it is a wonderful contemplation! The gospel is full of mercy and mercy for sinners, too. It is in this sense said to be a pauper's gospel - that is to say, it is a gospel for those who have nothing to pay; those who have no money to come with. Nor can it ever be bought or purchased with money.

*-Mercy never can be bought,
Grace is free; and all's the Lamb's. Gadsby's 1044)*

We need pardoning mercy. Oh, is not this the one great thing with exercised people? Is it the one great thing with you?

*Assure my conscience, of her part
In the Redeemer's blood; (Gadsby's 24)*

"...that we may obtain mercy." The mercy of forgiveness. To know that our sins, are blotted out as a thick cloud and will never be brought against us in the judgment day; Oh, it is wonderful mercy, it is great, rich, free, sovereign mercy alone that eaves spoor hell-deserving Wretch. He must stand on the ground of mercy for no other ground will hold him.

*Mercy, through blood, I make my plea;
Oh God, be merciful to me! (Gadsby's 385)*

" ...that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Grace is the Lord's favour toward His people in supporting and sustaining them through their pilgrimage and indeed in the salvation of their souls, "For by grace (we) are saved through faith; and that not of (ourselves); it is the gift of Gods" We are saved by ,His grace from first to last without any merit in us, by mercy and grace flowing freely together through the merits of Christ, the wounds of our incarnate God. Grace then has reference to that divine support that sustains the Lord's people in their pilgrimage, especially under the trials and afflictions that weigh them down and sometimes bring them to the borders of despair, as was the case with the Apostle Paul, when he prayed that the thorn in the flesh might be removed from him. For this he besought the Lord thrice, although he knew where it came from, and why he had got it - lest he should be exalted above measure - but when the Lord answered He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for, my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is grace then, it is His grace that holds us up; it is His grace that bears us along. It is His grace that brings us through the furnace; it is His grace that enables us to hold fast the profession of our faith.

It is His grace that enables us to respond to every gospel invitation. It is grace alone that shall bring us through. By His grace we shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

"...find grace to help in time of need." Is it a time of need with you? If so, may the Lord help you to come boldly unto the throne of grace. You may have a special need. It is always a time of need in one sense, but there are times of special need. Is it a time of special need with you now? Have you something wearing you down, a heavy burden pressing upon your heart; some inward exercise; are you tempest-tossed or in some fiery temptation, or walking through great darkness? If so it is a time of need. There are times with the Lord's people when if the Lord did not appear on their behalf they would sink and never rise again, But His grace is all-sufficient: We cannot have a need but that God is able to supply that need, and not only able to, but willing to. "My God," said the Apostle, "shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We must leave it here.

Amen.