

Notes of a sermon preached by Mr. J. H. Gosden on 21st. March, 1962

Text: 1 Corinthians 1.30 & 31

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

What a solemn thing it is to have a being; a being of which we cannot dispossess ourselves; a being for which we are accountable to God; to be born into this world and to have to go out of it and to have to do with a holy God and to be born sinners. There is no such thing as innocence now in the human race, born in sin and shapen in iniquity since Adam's fall. There is no difference in the whole human race by nature. Some, of course, live upright lives and are beneficial to their fellow mortals but by nature we all come short of the glory of God, and what is more, if we are brought to know it it will be a very solemn matter to us. The natural mind is not only a little deficient, it is utterly depraved so that it is enmity against God. The Lord God claims perfection. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". That is what God claims from us. If we are brought to realise that claim we shall know and feel that we are utterly lost in ourselves, unable to meet that claim and as unwilling as unable, and it is worse in a sense to have a being like that than never to have a being. I believe when God deals with men He makes them sometimes feel a real desire that they might never have had a being, or if a being, not an accountable being; humanity is accountable. We are invested with these faculties that bring a man to God and God claims all. This is a very solemn thing to know, it means condemnation, it means alienation from God, it means something that will end, if grace prevent not, in eternal ruin. Sometimes it is so extreme in the feeling of it that a person may be afraid of himself, of the capability that is in him to sin and the inability to do anything to please God. It is solemnly true and known feelingly by those who are taught by the Spirit so as to be cut off from all hope in themselves for -

"Out of Christ, almighty power
Can do nothing but devour."

what a devouring you may feel, or may have felt, as under the law in your sinful helplessness. The longer you have lived the more you feel to be guilty of these dreadful shortcomings of the glory of God. How is it possible for such a case to be dealt with, to be remedied? There is no way according to the law, no

hope for a sinner of doing anything, nothing he can present to the Lord to atone for his sin or change his nature. Men may, and do, outwardly reform their lives but that does not make atonement, that does not give peace with God, and what ever we have as privileges, riches, strength, might, whatever we have can contribute nothing towards our acceptance with God. Nothing can purchase the love of God, nothing can merit the peace and pardon of God, but there is a way and that is before us in this text. Before any person can pursue this blessed way to heaven he must be brought down to nothing.

The apostle sets forth here the characters of those who are called. "Ye see your calling brethren". He goes on to show how the Lord chooses base things and things which are despised and things which are not to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. The Lord brings all His people to nought and to something worse than nothing. When He teaches them what they are, they not only have nothing to glory in themselves but have much to be ashamed of and afraid of as they see what they are. They are brought to feel nothing but sinners, helpless, ruined, lost, undone sinners. That is the place where God brings His people in order that they shall perceive what He has done for them in the Gospel and the covenant of grace. Paul writes to the saints of God here at Corinth and also to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours". What a wonderful thing it is to be made a praying person, to be so brought down in a sense of need, helplessness and ruin and yet to be led to pray to God. The saints of God are one in prayer but you may look at that term 'saint' and tremble. We often sing about saints, poor trembling saints and so on, but you may say I am a sinner, not a saint. But what are saints? Saints are sinners sanctified, convicted of their sin, brought to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus and to pray to Him and to God through Him. You may not be able to find many evidences of saintship in your soul but if you are made a praying person and call upon the name of Jesus Christ for the mercy of God you are included in that term. These people are brought to know, by the Lord's teaching, that not only are they less than nothing and sinful worms in themselves but that they have in the Lord Jesus eternal life; that they have union to Him. Of Him, says the apostle, are ye in Christ Jesus, you who have nothing but shame in yourselves, helplessness and ruin, have a being in Christ, a union to Him formed by God, purposed by Him from eternity. That is the secret of spiritual life, that is the secret of regeneration, being in Christ in covenant union; this is by the choice of God. All the people of God from eternity are in Christ Jesus by the purpose of God. He chose them in Him before the world was, a great mystery, an act of divine sovereignty, an act of God's goodness. O what a wonder it is that the eternal and holy, sin-hating God should, before the world was, have

chosen a people for Himself and given them to His Son. He gives grace and life to these people in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus". How are they in Christ Jesus? By precious faith, when cut off from all else, condemned in their consciences under the law, bringing them out of every refuge of lies. You find that in the Psalmist's experience he said, "Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." O what a great thing it is to have any knowledge of Christ, in a sense of condemnation under the law, as a way of escape, like those cities of refuge which were set up in Israel and are typical of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sinner who flees into that city. A man slayer was safe in that city until the death of the priest, so Christ is the refuge for sinners, there is no other.

"Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus". This brings about in the soul which is united to the Lord Jesus a fruitful union, union in love. Faith worketh by love. We could not bear much. I should like to know more of it but I could not preach if I felt it. O to know a little of it and to feel your heart going out to Him as your Saviour, Redeemer, as having laid down His precious life to make atonement for your sin, as the Son of God who in infinite condescension took your nature for that purpose. He is the Son of God and He took upon Him human nature and, by so doing, He honoured unspeakably our nature. What is man that God should be mindful of him, mindful not only in His holy providence by covenant, but that He should be so mindful of him as to come down in the Person of His eternal Son and take up their nature into union with Himself. This was necessary if we are to be saved because there is no way of salvation apart from satisfaction to God. God cannot save people in their sins, but will and does save them from their sins. But in order to this those sins must be condemned and satisfied for. If we have union to Christ it is because the Son of God took our nature and took our place as if He were a law-breaker and interposed Himself to make atonement for our sin. O what a great thing it is, what a great word it is, it has been to me,

"Complete atonement thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
What'er thy people owed"

He did so in obedience to His divine Father and herein was that one way God appointed by which He sustained His holy character in perfection and yet made a way for mercy to save sinners. It is more than one can imagine. I remember in my young days that under deep and solemn conviction and almost in despair I could not see how such a sinner as I felt to be and was and am, could be saved, how God could save such a one as myself and the temptation was strong to give up all hope and make the best of a bad case. Unbelief is dreadful when it prevails in a convicted sinner. It would soon drive a man to despair unless

the Lord upholds him, not by the sinner changing himself, not by anything he can do, not by reducing the standard of God's claims in the law which is perfection, but by providing a Substitute and by causing that in human nature Christ should triumph over sin. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". There was a fulness there, and in His sacred obedience and sacrificial death there was an expression, an exercise of that grace. Everything He did was perfect and this is the way the Lord chose to save sinners by and to give those who deserved eternal perdition an eternal being in Christ, an eternal union in Him and eternal life by His death. So He is made to those people the wisdom of God. To the Jew He was a stumbling-block because the Jew did not know himself, did not know that his nature was enmity against God, he thought he could perform a righteousness which God could accept. But God cannot accept anything but that which is perfect, and we cannot produce it. So the Jew stumbled; he went about to establish a righteousness, to make himself acceptable unto God. The Greek too called the cross of Christ foolishness, which it is to carnal reason. I am more afraid of my carnal reason than I am afraid of my ignorance. Reason can do a great deal of damage, but when the Lord brings His people down to nothing, to be foolish and ignorant in their own esteem, when they lose their independence and are made willing to be taught by the Lord then how thankful some of you may feel even this evening that God can save sinners without any infringement of His justice through the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. It was a light in my understanding at that time, though I was very young and knew but very little and was far from knowing my interest in that salvation; but I saw how God could save a sinner. What a great thing that is, and if the cross of Christ is made to you wisdom, you will be after an interest in it; you will see the beauty of it, the wonder of it, the substitution of the Person of Christ, the God-Man and Mediator to make reconciliation between sinners and a holy God by the sacrifice of Himself.

"Who of God is made unto us wisdom". He is made wisdom also to His people as He is a Counsellor. If you are born again you are brought to feel your need of a Guide and Counsellor in every step of your journey through life. You will have set before you a pilgrimage in which you need the Lord every step of the way and you will find the need of the Lord being to you what He is in 9th. Isaiah where Christ is spoken of in the spirit of prophecy. "For unto us a child is born, unto a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace", and His names are not idle titles, He is what He is called, He is a Counsellor for poor pilgrims who if they have the Lord Jesus for their wisdom will need it. How often we feel to need Him to be our

wisdom and guide and counsellor through the scenes of this changing life and sometimes may be thankful that He is what He is and unchangeable. We change, times change, changes go over our heads but the Lord is unchangeable, the same God only wise and He can and does give wisdom to the poor. For if we are guided by the Lord's counsel we shall not err, even "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein".

He is not only made wisdom to His people but is made righteousness. We must have a righteousness, we must be made righteous, there is no entrance into heaven without a righteousness and that a perfect one. Our own righteousness, the Scriptures tell us, and we feel it, is only as filthy rags. I am sometimes painfully conscious, the Lord knows, of the sin-stained character of the very best performances of my life. You will have nothing to glory in if you are one of the Lord's people and He teaches you; no glorying in the flesh, no glorying in the best duties you can do, no trusting in your own righteousness. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness". You can trust in that; it cannot be rejected, it was wrought out by the Lord Himself who lived a holy life, He redeemed those who were under the law by His obedience to it. By His divine Person He honoured it, magnified it as the Scripture declares. If you are shown how He obeyed it, honoured God in it, in everything in His holy life, in every faculty of His humanity it will strengthen your faith, it will bring admiration to your soul and you will say that is sufficient, and it is, but it is to be imputed. He is made righteousness to His people through divine imputation. This was the Father's purpose, God made Him to be sin that His people might be made the righteousness of God in Him. His obedience was not only a complete obedience to the law it was an obedience in His sacrificial death. As the great High Priest He gave His life a ransom, He wrought out a righteousness by His obedience, He lay down His life to make an atonement for His people's sin. He is their Righteousness. Bunyan said his righteousness was before God in heaven, Christ was his righteousness. He evidently had a sacred sense of imputation, that God looked upon him in and through the Lord Jesus, He was before him as an Intercessor and his righteousness was there. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength". This brings out the very solemn and yet blessed truth of the substitution of Christ and the imputation to the Lord Jesus of the sins of all His people. The righteousness that He wrought out, I speak tremblingly, but I would say firmly, that the righteousness that Christ wrought out could not be imputed to His sinful people apart from the imputation to Him of their sins. It is a total imputation, a very solemn, very sacred, yet very necessary and all-sufficient truth. Righteousness was provided for His people, atonement made for them, and Christ is made of God righteousness to His people. To wear that

robe, to use a Scripture figure, is a great thing, to feel that you have acceptance in the Beloved because the righteousness of Christ is put upon you, imputed to you and reckoned yours. There are three words used by the Holy Ghost in Romans, three words that mean the same thing in the original - counted, reckoned, imputed - it means that God reckons, counts and imputes the obedience of Christ to His unworthy people for whom He lay down His life upon Calvary's cross. Here is the shelter, here is the refuge of a poor, dying sinner. Is it yours? Can you say as is so often quoted, but can you say it with a feeling of repose upon the merit of Christ,

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name."

There is a solid trust, no-one ever perished there.

He is made sanctification - without this there is no heaven.

Sanctification - being set apart for God. God does set His people apart, He sets them apart by His blessing, by His grace, separates them unto Himself. Sanctification - it is the conformity of the soul to the Lord Jesus. It is union to Him whereby holiness is communicated to them. Everything depends upon this union from eternity. That eternal union must have a fruition in the experience of those who have that union to Him in the covenant and this will bring fruits of holiness, fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ and to the glory of God. They are not the works of the creature merely but the fruits of union to Christ as the Lord Jesus speaks in the similitude of the Vine and branches. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" - fruits of holiness. I believe the Lord does produce this sanctification in His people by His solemn dealings with them, His refining teaching. You look in Malachi where the refining is spoken of and how the Lord says concerning His people, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." But they are not only not consumed with all the fiery trials through which they pass, they are refined by them, what an unspeakable mercy to go through fiery trials and not be consumed as you fear; we prove how weak faith is, how little we know. If we have union to Christ that will not be broken, rather the union will be more clearly manifested because we shall be cast upon Him for help and preservation and the Lord said that He would "refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." Is there a greater thing to be said, to know that God is yours, your Father in Christ Jesus and Christ your elder Brother born for your adversity, wearing your nature though the eternal Son of God?

This sanctification will be completed in heaven. It begins here. There is real sanctification here, Christ prayed for it for His people and what He prays for they will get. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth". It is by the Word of God, by the manifestation of Christ to the soul, by His precious voice heard in the heart, His promises, His sweet declarations of pardon and peace, His kind invitations, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Those words that He speaks produce not only encouragement but they sanctify, there will be instruction, there will be sanctification, it will set you apart. It brings you into communion with the Lord. You know that some of you in a measure, and I hope I know it in some measure. Christ said in the 15th. John, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you". When the Lord speaks to a person it separates him, it unites him to the speaker and that is separating. You could not hear the Lord's voice and receive through His sacred Word some gracious promise, some intimation of His favour and kindness toward you, and deliberately walk in sin; it has a purifying effect in the soul. Christ has holiness enough to sanctify us all. Do you feel you could say with the hymn writer -

"Jesus' precious blood, once spilt,
I depend on solely,
To release and clear my guilt;
But I would be holy".

You must have both the application of the atonement to your conscience and the communication of sanctification to your soul to get to heaven. No unholy person reaches heaven and the truth is heaven would be hell to one who is not sanctified. If you have a spark of divine grace in your heart there will be times when you long to be holy and anything that defiles is a great trouble to you and your hope is one day to be without the slightest vestige of sin and defilement. It is terrible to be a sinner even if pardoned, to have sin in our nature; but the Lord will sanctify His people. When He is in your heart the hope of glory, when you feel His redeeming blood, when you have some sense of His compassion and mercy to you and some realisation of what it cost Him to make you His, then you will love Him. You cannot help loving Him when He gives you to feel He has redeemed you, that you are His.

He is made of God unto us sanctification. That will bring conflict, all the holy desires of our heart will be challenged by our old man and by Satan. What a blessed thing that Christ is also made redemption. This redemption is His purchase and in His redeeming sacrifice He opened a fountain. It was not merely that He did redeem His people and make complete atonement for their sin on Calvary's cross but He opened that fountain which is always available -

"Dear dying Lamb! thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

If Christ is made redemption to you, though you are a sinner, you will not think lightly of sin or live carelessly as if you can enjoy your sin and yet get to heaven because Christ died for you. That is contrary to Gospel experience. Sin will be the chief trouble if you are in a healthy state. May the Lord never leave us to think lightly of sin. When you can look up to the Lord Jesus and appeal to Him and pray to Him that sin may not have dominion over you, that you may be preserved from committing it, there is this fountain. It means that the people of God when they are made conscious of their sins, their defilements, have a place to go to where they can obtain cleansing. This will keep you close to the throne of grace. He is there to bestow forgiveness on the redeemed, to His people. He is exalted a prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins and He is there to give His people redemption, a fountain full of mercy, an ocean fulness. This is a mercy for some of us. What could we do without the throne of grace, without the fountain full of Christ's merit, full of love? The hymn has it beautifully,

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

We shall need that fountain to the end. I am thankful it is a fountain - are you? Do you find a necessity upon you day by day for that fountain and to pray to the dear Redeemer to give you a fresh sense of pardon and cleansing by the fountain. O to have a touch of it is a very sacred experience.

"That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." We would glory in Him though unworthy even to take His name we would serve Him if we could according to the new man, though wretched sinners with respect to our fallen nature. There will be eternity to glory in Christ. Praise to Him that the redeemed render in heaven is a sweet prospect to poor sinners who come so short here. How short we come! I sometimes feel the things of God are so solemn and so vast I should never speak of them. Here is a text setting forth what Christ is made to His people. You may say I do not know much of Him but I do want Him. He is all sufficient - less than Himself will not suffice. May He come into our hearts, into our lives, and bring us safely through and give us final victory over all. I am sorry I cannot preach as I would but may the substance of the text rest in your hearts. Amen