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Not corrected by Mr. Gosden.

Sermon preached by Mr. J.H. GOSDEN at Chippenham, on  
Wednesday evening 11th June, 1958.

Text: Hebrews VII. v.24,25.

"But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an  
unchangeable priesthood.

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the  
uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth  
to make intercession for them."

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Christ's immutability and His continuing priesthood,  
and His discharging of that priesthood in heaven by way of  
presentation of His people and their interests before the  
Father through His merit, is an infallible source of encourage-  
ment to all rightly convicted, struggling pilgrims upon earth.  
I know of nothing that can support the sinking soul and raise  
him from the borders of the pit to the gates of heaven in  
feeling, like an apprehension of an immutable, ever-living  
Christ at the right hand of God on the throne of grace. He is  
unspeakably attractive and unspeakably precious to every one  
who is brought to believe in Him. Peter said the truth: "Unto  
you therefore which believe He is precious;" or, as the margin  
reads, "He is an honour." What an honour it is for a poor worm  
of the earth to be allowed to come by Him to God; to employ Him,  
so to speak; and that is said and done always, when done by the  
Spirit, with deepest reverence. The hymnwriter says, "Him in  
everything employ." O, but how insignificant, what polluted,  
unworthy worms we are to think of Him, to have anything to do  
with Him! Yet we are compelled to, for the reason that we are  
lost without Him. There is no salvation anywhere else but in

the Lord Jesus, and no satisfaction in a sinner's heart taught of the Spirit apart from communion with God in Christ.

"But this Man;" - in contrast to the other men in the other priesthood who did not continue by reason of death, and passed their priestly office on to others. But Christ will never do that. The contrast is wonderful, not only with respect to Christ's living "after the power of an endless life," but with respect to the merit of His Person, His all-sufficiency, His almighty power, His being invested with universal authority, and especially the undiminishable merit and virtue of His one sacrifice. But though the sacrifice was one, offered once for all, it is of eternal worth, of infinite merit and undiminishable virtue. One of the reasons why we continually and increasingly feel our need of "this Man" is because, though <sup>if</sup> grace is in our hearts, we do not live in sin, sin still lives in us, and we therefore must, if we come to God at all, come through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. O, how encouraging it is! What a foundation for hope there is in the truth of Christ's enthronement, and continuing His priesthood before God! "But this Man, because He continueth ever."

There is another point that seems very sacred to me, and it is this, that He still wears our nature. He is a real Man. He took our nature up, never to lay it down. Very solemn, very sacred mystery! He was made in all things like unto His brethren, except sin. That is one blessed exception. He "became us" Who is holy, undefiled and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. He is a suitable High Priest,

and He is suitable because He is a Man, and yet He is and ever has been eternal God. O, I wish we might by the Spirit's help contemplate that! When He condescended to come down to this lower world in His infinite grace, He never ceased to be what He eternally was. He veiled His glory, but He could not dispossess Himself of it. No need for Him to do that! He was the Son of man in heaven when He was speaking to John upon earth. We know these mysteries are beyond our comprehension, but not beyond the reception of humble faith. And these doctrines are real nourishment to poor, hungry believers, sinful worms. O, I am thankful sometimes that the Lord is what He is and where He is: the Man Christ Jesus, true almighty God, and glorified in His humanity. In the 5th verse of the 17th of John, when praying to His divine Father, expressing that He had now finished the work given Him to do, He said, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine Own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was;" and I take it that really signifies that He is, as the Man Christ Jesus, glorified beyond all our conception. Yet His people are <sup>predestinated</sup> ~~designed~~ to be conformed to Him in holiness, in righteousness. Can you aspire so high? And has the Holy Spirit been a witness in your heart and conscience to your interest in the Lord Jesus and His sin-atonement death, and to your interest in the covenant and all its promises which, by His precious blood, He sealed?

"But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood," - to exercise. He exercises it in heaven. O, He is there in the interests of His people. He

lives in their interests, and to fulfil in their experience that wonderful word, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" and that means that everything that could destroy us and overthrow us is under His control; only, if we are taught of the Spirit we shall be taught our sinnership, our weakness, our danger and our constant need, and we shall be taught the solemn and sacred necessity and privilege of prayer.

So, connected with this continuing priesthood and intercession of Christ, the apostle says, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." That is a very discriminating word, "that come unto God by Him." Do we come to God? Are we praying people? Do we find access at the throne of grace? It is not an easy thing for a sinner to come to God. A convicted man sometimes sees so much within him, and feels so condemned and so helpless and weak and depraved in nature, that he hardly dares to think of approaching the great I AM, nor could he apart from Christ and His mediation. It is just at that juncture where the value of Christ's mediation is manifested. When people think they have some claim upon God, and can go to Him lightly and pray to Him for things they want, and there is no conviction of sin, no repentance for it, and no faith in the Lord Jesus, what kind of faith is that? But then, on the other hand, some of you may be deeply concerned about your interest in the electing love and decree of God, which is more or less implicit and explicit oftentimes through the scripture. Ah, it may be a great trial to some of the

Lord's people, some convicted people, feeling themselves to be unusual sinners, and not knowing and being fearfully tempted and tried as to whether they are one of the election of grace. Then you may be tempted that you must not come because you are not elect, and the devil may seek to prevent from confessing your sin and pleading with God for Christ's sake for pardon, because you see no signs of election in your heart. Well, let me say this, if there be a sinner in that condition, sinking into the pit in his feelings, down low at the bottom of the sea in his experience, like Jonah was, - the thing with you is this, if you are brought to believe in Christ and to believe that He is sufficient for you, that He did lay down his life for sinners, there will be in your heart a going to Him, lost or saved, elect or non-elect, and you may meet with that wonderful word, the Holy Spirit may bring it into your heart with strengthening efficacy, - what did the Lord Jesus say? (and He taught the doctrine of election as clearly as any ever taught it;) He did say this, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." O, what a strength that is to people who have no claim except the claim they venture to make upon the Lord's faithfulness to His promise! With that they commit themselves to Him;

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall;  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all."

If you are really brought there in heart experience, I will tell you this, - the Lord help you to believe it, not because I say it but because of the word of God, - it is because you are

one who is chosen to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him." Some of you may be saying immediately in your heart, "Draw me, Lord! Draw even me! I am diffident, I am unworthy, I am fearful, I am tempted; but do draw me and give me courage to come just as I am!" And you must come like that!

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

If you bring a penny to buy a blessing, if you bring some excuse or some promise, or some extenuation, you will find no acceptance. It is a venture, I know; but what a mercy to make that venture! And what a solemn thing to be brought down to the necessity of it! You will be brought there sometimes. You feel you must have Christ, you cannot leave it alone; and sometimes there is a real violence in a poor sinner's heart in coming. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" and <sup>with</sup> that violence there is the deepest reverence. Said Jacob, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me."

"But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." This seems to take in the most difficult case, the worst case: "uttermost." Each of us, I suppose, - at least those who are convicted of their sins, have an uttermost. Can you reach it? Can you fathom it? I cannot! Can you count your sins, or measure them or analyse them? They are black, they are high, they are deep,

they are intensive and extensive; internal, hearty, thought, motive sins, sins of omission, and unknown sins. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." There are so many little sinners about who think because they have some gospel notions and can sing the hymns and walk fairly uprightly outwardly all is right; but where the Spirit works there will be a turning again and yet again to see what is in our nature; and the uttermost is very solemn. I could not dare, - I am thankful I am not called upon to express what I have felt and seen within of late in my own heart. It has made me tremble. O, but I am thankful to believe in the merit of Christ, in the virtue of His death, the efficacy of His blood, and His unchangeable faithfulness and undying love and power to save to the uttermost! I should be in despair but for this text and what it signifies. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

Let me notice one or two points about this uttermost salvation and the connection between that and Christ's intercession. The implication is this, that when we pray to God we must come through the mediation of Christ and under the shelter and in the authority of His Name. O, what a mercy that is, that Christ is there to bring sinners to God, broken sinners, brokenhearted sinners, and their poor petitions! The Lord mingles with these <sup>petitions</sup> ~~petitions~~, as it were, the infinite merit of His sacrifice and His Personal authority as Mediator.

"He, in the days of feeble flesh,  
Poured out His cries and tears;  
And, in His measure, feels afresh,  
What every member bears."

But in His authority now He spreads His wounded hands and represents His people before the Father in His Own merit.

"With authority He asks,  
Enthroned in glory now."

My friends, whatever your case may be, there is none can help you but Christ. The Advocate with the Father, and His blood which cleanses from all sin, will bring you down into your heart the enjoyment of pardon. Forgiveness is one great covenant blessing. "These sins and iniquities will I remember no more for ever;" and that on account of Christ's death.

This is salvation in the knowledge of it. Are you satisfied without the knowledge of it? Do you go for this very thing? Do you ask the Lord to grant you in your conscience the atonement, to purge it with the precious blood of Christ, to give you the enjoyment of peace and reconciliation, to give you a clear sky, to remove your guilt and that which separates you and makes a cloud between you and God? Well, Christ can do all this. Forgiveness is handed down, so to speak, from God the Father through God the Son by God the Holy Ghost. The Trinity is engaged in salvation. You cannot separate Them, though you may distinguish Their Persons and Their relationships. But there is a blessed union. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are savingly united in the experience of a sinner when, by the Holy Spirit, he prays for pardon through Jesus Christ. And there is no sinner too black to receive this forgiveness as he may be led to confess and forsake his sins and plead the blood of Christ. I know David prayed to be kept back from presumptuous sins; "then," he said, "I shall be innocent from the great

transgression;" by which I believe he meant that he needed to be kept from that unforgivable sin, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And the Lord is able to save His people from that; and is it not inferable from that petition of David's that we have in our nature even the germ of that sin? We are capable of it, unless we are kept.

So this salvation contains a double phase, as it were. It is, first of all, divine remission, the loosening of your guilt in your experience because your sin has already been atoned by the sacrifice of Christ. It is not an easy thing to attain to, and yet it can never be merited, never be earned; it is given freely. It costs the Lord Jesus nothing but the exercise of His kingly authority as the King of grace, and the exercise of His love; the same love which He exercised in His precious, suffering death, He exercises towards His people in forgiving their sins. Happy is that person who knows what that blessing is!

"Saved is the sinner that believes,  
The sacred gospel annals show."

He receives this forgiveness. It comes down into his heart as a real experience. The Lord brings it, comes with it by His Spirit and word. It is as real, as substantial, - and more so than what is tangible to nature. It is spiritual. It makes a mark, and you will never forget it if you once have it; and if you have not it and want it, you will never rest without it. There is no real rest in a sinner's heart until he has locked up there divine remission. And O, how that does convey the love of God! How it does produce the sweetest repentance! How it

does kindle in the heart that vehement desire for holiness, and beget that jealousy and that revenge in hatred of sin. Only those who have felt it can understand it; and yet some of you, perhaps, have not yet received this blessing. The Lord is able to do it. Cherish the least hope of it. I would not depreciate the least little hope a poor, convicted sinner has that Christ died for him, but I would not set you down satisfied with a hope without assurance. It is the Spirit's work. Christ, by His Spirit, brings it home, brings it in, presses it into the conscience. It is like the blessing spoken of in Malachi: "I will . . . pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." I do not want to discourage any who feel they are devoid of this. If you are a child of God born again, quickened and brought to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, this blessing is before you if you have not yet attained to it; and it is to be asked for. Has not the Lord Jesus Himself said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you"? And might I venture to mention what I have frequently mentioned here, and that is, that the Lord exercises not only His mercy, His compassion, His faithfulness and His love, but His justice, in pardoning poor sinners. There is something very sweet about that to me. In the 45th of Isaiah the Lord declares Himself to be "a just God, and a Saviour;" and He says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." But it is not abstract Deity; it is God in Christ. There He is love, and there alone. O, what we owe to this plan of salvation,

this effective work of God the Son incarnate! And He continues!

The other point is this, the subduing of sin; not only the forgiveness of sin, but the preservation of a sinner from falling foully, and from the dominion of sin. It is a mystery, but according to scripture, and according to observation, and according to experience, there is no such thing in this life as a son of Adam being perfectly sinless. There are people who claim it; they have 'got saved' on a certain date, and have never sinned since; but I do not believe the truth of it. Ah, it would be wonderful to be without sin, and the hope of one ~~day~~ day being perfectly holy is a glorious hope. O, we should be utterly ~~exactly~~ disappointed if salvation stopped short of that, a heaven's holiness! But there is such a thing as having sin subdued, having it overcome by grace, so that it shall not dominate the life, so that we shall not serve sin. "Ye were the servants of sin," said Paul, "but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." And that, I believe, is the work of the Holy Spirit. We are said to be saved through sanctification of the spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; and that is a part, a very real part, of salvation.

I believe every child of God pants after holiness. He is brought to depend entirely upon the blood of Christ for divine remission, and he does seek to be made as holy as a sinner can be made in this life. I think Murray McCheyne prayed that prayer, that the Lord would make him as holy as it was possible for a sinner to be made this side of eternity. O, but this involves something very solemn! It involves the influence, the

invincible power, of Christ by His Spirit upon the whole of our nature, upon every faculty of our being, upon our will. Are we willing to be made clean? "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." There is so much vacillation, so much double-mindedness about us. I do not pretend to be all spirit by any means! The Lord knows what trouble I have with indwelling sin; and alas, that there should be any hesitation at any time with respect to the crucifixion of the flesh! But nothing can bring us to that but the blood of Christ. "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." That does not mean that the sinner quickens his soul, or contributes to his salvation. It does mean that he obtains access to God in Christ, Who bestows upon him that measure of grace and of the Spirit to enable him and make him willing to walk like Paul walked. I have looked at that verse in the second chapter to the Galatians many times, and coveted to have the experience of it, though it is very painful to the flesh, and may involve more than we know; but there are times when a child of God is made willing to sacrifice everything, not to contribute to salvation, but because of his desire for holiness and his love to the Lord. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Would it not be living if we were enabled to live like that?

Well, the Lord is the source of all grace; and He is able to accomplish this in us. Did He not pray to His divine

Father for His elect's sake, and say, "I pray that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil of the world"? "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." O, what a word that is! Do you pray the Lord to do it for you? so to make His word formative in your heart, moulding your life and spirit, as that you shall be separated from the world by it, by reason of the Lord's presence? The Lord's presence does sanctify. When people pretend to believe in the Lord Jesus, and use His Name, and follow the fashions of this world, they betray either a rotten heart or deception. Sanctification is a concomitant of salvation, of pardon; it is a part of it. But no child of God will ever feel in this life to reach the standard he longs for; but he hopes to one day, and he believes the Lord is able to do it. He believes the Lord can do what will make him <sup>fit</sup> for heaven, and can bring him there; and that is salvation to the uttermost.

It involves, too, a bringing of His people through every trial, every difficulty, and to give them victories over sin, Satan, self, and the world; and final victory. He can do it! He got the victory, my friends, and is in heaven as the Captain, Saviour, and Forerunner of His people; and He is continuing there in the interests of His people upon earth. It means this, there is a blood-bought right, given to poor sinners who feel their need, to come to Jesus Christ, and through Him to the Father, in all their necessities and troubles and temptations and affliction and losses, for all-sufficient grace to persevere to the end. And it means this, <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ sinner has the privilege of

going to the Mediator of the covenant and pleading, "As he finds his needs require, the fulfilment of those so great and precious promises that are in the gospel. O, some of those rich promises you may look upon, and then one day you may say, "I have looked on that promise with admiration many times, but now I am in a case imperatively to need the fulfilment of it, and I cannot go on without the fulfilment of it." It is one thing to look at a promise and admire it, and another thing to need the fulfilment of it. Who can fulfil the promises? Not the sinner! He can, through grace and by faith in the Spirit's power, plead the promises and pray the Lord to fulfil it; and that is the way, the method of the Lord in dealing with His people, that they should pray for those things which He designs to give them; and He brings His people into those places in order to this blessing. Ah, it is a mystery! Many of the things the Lord does, and many things He suffers to be done in our circumstances in life, we cannot understand; and, alas for us, there is that imperious pride and ignorance that would catechize Him, that would challenge His right and wisdom in some things. O, the wickedness of our nature! But the Lord knows how to subdue it and to bring a poor sinner down to a real submission to the will of God and a prayer for all-sufficient grace and strength to persevere."Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." One said, "Hold out, faith and patience!" We cannot hold out, unless we get <sup>of life.</sup> communications from the Lord Jesus.

I thought the other day of a word I trust the Lord gave me many years ago. It seemed to come up again in the necessity

of it. When I got it first it seemed wonderful and sweet. It was this, "Because I live, ye shall live also." And if you feel death within you, death without you, weakness, temptation, darkness, and feel almost as if your religion is going spark out, then to see that promise, why, it helps a poor creature to pray: "Lord, fulfil it in me!" And I do believe He did a little; I believe I got a glimpse of Him, too, and there is virtue in a glimpse, there is power in a spiritual apprehension of Christ on the right hand of God. It removes slavish fear, it enlivens hope, it warms the heart in love, and it gives patience to follow after the Lord. Pilgrimage is not an easy thing. We must walk by faith, and not by sight. But the secret of perseverance is the presence and intercession of the Lord Jesus on the right hand of the throne of God. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

Then presently there will be the uttermost of enjoyment. You may say oftentimes you enjoy but very little. You know a good deal of conflict, a good deal of depression, a good many tears and much mourning; but that is all from life. But the time is coming when the sunshine will be unclouded, and when the days of mourning shall be over, because sin will be finished, there will be no more hight and no more starvation, no more desertion. O, what a prospect it is! - from the bottomless pit, in your feelings and sense of desert, to be brought through this wilderness, to be kept as the apple of the Lord's eye, to be given strength according to your day, to be succoured in temptation, to be given victories over every enemy, to be given

patience to endure the will of God, and then to be landed safe in heaven! That is uttermost salvation, in the believer's heart. O, what a day is before the Lord's people! Here we suffer grief and pain; here we often mourn without the sun; here we get broken bones and shame and reproach and guilt; but there is an end, and I believe, solemn as it is, the Lord brings His people off from every creature. Sooner or later, they have to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and wait only upon the Lord. Not but that the Lord's people may confer together and be mutually helpful in the pathway of life in comparing notes, and so on, and exhorting one another, and speaking often one to another, as Malachi has it. All that is helpful; but finally, and underneath all, you find you have to wait upon the Lord. And there are some things you can never tell a creature; some fears that you have of coming short, some secret sins that you feel will overthrow you, some peculiar difficulty in your case, something inexplicable in your circumstances. But the Lord knows it all; and what a relief it is to be enabled to turn the face to the wall, away from every creature, and to come to God. And then, when you come through Christ to the Father, there is a sacred relationship. I like to think of this, though it is very solemn; and I believe not much known. But you cannot come to the Father through Jesus Christ by faith without the Spirit of adoption, even although you may not understand it. O, it is wonderful to get a little touch of it, to feel, as I hope I have once or twice in my life, that sacred relationship to the Father in and through the incarnate Son; He

the essential, eternal Son of the Father incarnate in our nature, and we adopted children and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. O, said the Lord Jesus, "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." And Christ said, "I ascend unto My God, and your God, to My Father, and your Father." We dare not approach too near to some sacred things; they are often better meditated upon than uttered with our voice; and yet there is something very sacred about it, because it means the whole inheritance, and that is what salvation is;- saved from poverty to eternal riches, in possessing Christ. Poor world, clamouring after the pelf, the sordid things of this life, defying God and all conventions to gain something here below; nothing better! They must leave it all soon. And a poor child of God, as covetous as any, is brought to be satisfied and thankful for the Lord's providence, and says, "All this, and Christ!" It is a wonderful mercy to be brought really, honestly down in contentment and thankfulness before the Lord for His holy providence, in submission to every trial, and to be enabled to choose that better part which shall not be taken away.

The choice is by the prevention of the Lord's choice. That comes first. There is a real choice, I believe. O, said David, who had made that choice,, "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." As if he should say, "Lord, with them numbered may I be, now, and in eternity!"

Well, the Lord lead us! May we know Him! May we live before Him, love Him, live upon Him, and one day live with

Him, and enjoy Him for ever! The things of eternity seem beyond all my thought. I feel increasingly unable rightly to speak of them; but the Lord make the text and context, and the Person in the text, very precious to you! That will be enough. O, if you have Him in your heart, the hope of glory, then you will be able to praise and trust Him; and one day praise Him as you ought.

May the Lord pardon what I have said amiss.

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