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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 23 July 1924

Hosea 2 verses 14 and 15

"Therefore behold I will allure her and bring her  
into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her;  
and I will give her her vineyards from  
hence and the valley of Achor for a door  
of hope, and she shall sing there as in the days  
of her youth and as in the day when she came up out of  
the land of Egypt."

The connection of these verses containing so great and blessed promises is very solemn and remarkable. A description of the sad, evil ways of the people to whom these promises are made goes before the words I have read for a text; how they had gone away from their proper husband spiritually, and gone after their lovers; committed spiritual whoredom; were stubbornly ignorant of who it was that gave them their corn and wine and oil, and multiplied their silver and gold. This description of Israel will, I am sure, be in the understandings of any here, taught of God, a description of our vileness, how we have behaved towards Him who is, as we hoped and believed, our husband, our God, our Saviour. If it were not for the scriptures that are so constantly setting forth the frowardness, the disposition to backslide, the inability of the natural mind to receive the things of God and be subject to the law of God, we some of us should indeed conclude that our cases were infinitely beyond the reach of any hope of salvation, of mercy shown us from God, and with this connection it is, as I have said, remarkable that the Lord should say "Therefore behold" Well may Jehovah say "Behold". It is a sight, a scene of wonderful faithfulness, grace and patience, and determination and power that is manifested here. Ah we may well look into ourselves, and in all, out of God, for condemnation. We may well look for ruin, but God is faithful. God changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. It is not because we have no changes; it is not

because we have not sinned that we are not consumed in hell, of that I am persuaded.

"Behold I will allure her" Jehovah's will is fixed on His people from Eternity and will never be taken off her. His goodwill was toward her when, before He created man, He made a gift of her to His Son. This is the foundation of all that grace manifested, love and goodness and faithfulness and power manifested in the people of God, that God did give them to Christ; Christ received them. And this will of God, the will of the Father, and the love of the Father in giving them to Him, the willingness, the loving willingness of the Son in receiving the people that were given to Him of the Father, is the spring and fountain of all communion with God that shall ever be enjoyed and it is the foundation, and it is the security, the ultimate victory of the whole church, and this promise comes out of that same will ; A changeless, an eternal will, acting in various ways but always for the good of His people.

"I will allure her". This alluring of the people of God is an instruction. God deals with His people in their affections, through their understandings. He draws them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love. This alluring is wonderful. It is the kindness, the excellency, the glory, the goodness, the mercy of God in some degree cast about the poor, defiled, helpless sinner. It is an instruction, as when the Lord does by some little rays of His glory, shine into the understanding, into the heart of a sinner and cause that sinner to be a little attracted by and, although it may not be apprehended at the time, in some degree transformed into, that glory. An impression of the glory of divine love and goodness and grace and mercy and power and justice (these all harmonize), is made more or less distinctly upon the heart where there has been nothing but ruin, nothing but sin, nothing but a disposition to turn away from God and goodness. It may have a very small beginning, but there is life and warmth and efficacy to allure when this instruction is at all given. It says in the soul - God is great and glorious; His presence is salvation. It says that to be reconciled to God, to

be with God, to have God for your God, to know the things of God, to be not without God in the world, is better than all else. And this allures. I do not believe that the Lord deals with His people at all times in a way of driving them by the terrors of hell, His law does drive, and Satan drives; terrors run high. O but there is a time when the blessed God kindly and sternly and graciously does draw. It is stern with respect to the flesh; the flesh hates this alluring; the flesh says, spare me this, let me have this indulgence. O but the driving of the law and the alluring of the goodness and the glory and the majesty and love of God, these two things are above all the clamour of the flesh and above all the power of the enemy.

He allures His people sometimes by this - by giving them some manifestation of the blessed estate of the people of God. Not, I mean now putting them into that estate to their comfortable experience, but filling them with desire and sorrow, sorrow at what they feel, and desire that they may be in that estate, of that company, the people of the living God. There is an attraction in this. I think the church in the Canticles had something of this, rather those who followed the church, when they said - "Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions," It effects that in the heart. "With them numbered may I be, now and through Eternity", is the effect of this alluring. There is sorrow in it. O sorrow that you are such a sinner, that your sins have separated between you and God, and between you and a comfortable experience of being among the children. This brings about a wilderness. "And bring her into the wilderness". It makes a person humble, and humbly willing to follow the Lord wherever He will lead. He does lead His people into the wilderness; He makes a wilderness of everything that the world calls good and desirable and pleasant, both by showing the sinner the evil estate of being out of Christ, and also the blessed estate of being in Him. He makes the world a wilderness. You may still remain in your circumstances as before, be in the midst of the best that this life can afford, and yet by this alluring work of God the Holy Spirit in your heart you may feel that you are in a wilderness.

"And speak comfortably to her", Ah, perhaps some of you who are at the present time in such a state as is described by Jeremiah where He says - "My people hold fast deceit and refuse to know Me" little realise how you are, by following vanity, forsaking your own mercy. It is hard to be separated in spirit from the world, and in affection, from the best things that the world can afford you; hard to the flesh. O but it is merciful in God to allure. When the Lord has thus humbled a person, He brings him to a simplicity, He brings him to a teachableness, He makes him feel and say to the Lord - Lord, anything, if I may be made right." The bitter is made sweet. He says to the Lord in effect, in this his humbled state, "Lord do as seemeth good in Thy sight". This was the language of David when he was driven into the wilderness, out of Jerusalem, by his son. Said he "If the Lord delight in me, He will make me to see both it, that is the Ark, and His habitation, but if not, let Him do as seemeth Him good". It is a great thing to be brought into this humble submission to the Lord, to follow Him wherever He leads. I mean now in spiritual experience, not constitutionally. We do want to follow Him of course constitutionally, but this may be going on with circumstances quite comfortable and is often, I believe. And having allured her there, He says I will speak comfortably to her; speak to her heart. The noise of carnality, the mixture and confusion of the world, is not a place to hear God's voice comfortably, is not a place where you can hear the still small voice of the Spirit, and so He allures his people into the wilderness, and you will find, I believe, that this promise, as you are the people of God, will be fulfilled more or less constantly. It is very gracious of the Lord so to deal with men. He brings them apart, notwithstanding all the clamour of the flesh, so as to speak comfortably unto them.

And what is the comfort that He speaks? First, does He not say this to His poor people - "Trust in the Lord". Ah, the wilderness is a place where trust in God is a very solemn reality, for it is a place where there is none other to trust in. Everything else is spoiled; all other support of life is gone. That makes a wilderness. All the while you have the comfort, I

mean now spiritually, the comfort of things, you are not in a wilderness. When you have your friends around you, and your profession goes on smoothly, and people speak well of you, and when you have no especial exercise, then you are not in a wilderness. But when you are brought into the wilderness by some new exercise, when the Lord will do you good, when He permits things to drive you, when He graciously draws you, by showing to your sorrowful heart what you have done and what He is, and the blessed estate from which you have wandered, then is the time that such a word, such a gracious license given to you to trust in Him is very blessed, very real. May I trust in Thee? Would it be right for so vile and ruined a creature to trust in Thee? Would it be right for me to hope for salvation, to believe that I can be saved, since I have been what I have been, done what I have done? "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" is a gracious direction that He gives to a poor sinner when He allures him into the wilderness and that is trust. O it is a great venture to come, as being brought into the wilderness, and there to be directed to Him who went with the Israelites through the wilderness and who followed them through that wilderness; to go to Him; to hear Him, by His good Spirit, giving you that direction how to act now you are with Him in your shame and confusion and weakness.

"And speak comfortably unto her". There is another thing the Lord does speak to His people in the stillness of the wilderness, for the wilderness is a lonely place. This is it - "I will never leave thee. I will never forsake thee". Why, you say, I could not believe that the Lord could say that to me. Well He does not say it to people that deserve to have it said to them, but He does say it to people whom He has fitted to hear that word. Ah, you will need such a word if the Lord deals with you and brings you into the wilderness to stand face to face with Him in your shame. Then, in your weakness and in your fear, for Him to speak so to your heart - "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee". "O Israel thou shalt not be forgotten of me," this is comfort. It is comfort for God to speak kindly to a sinner. O there is no comfort like it. The least impression

of the divine word of God upon the heart of a sinner is comfort. I mean now these words which had given the soul to believe in the mercy of God. It is solemn to have a word of rebuke. The Lord does rebuke His people; He does chasten them for their sins. But I take it that here in this wilderness, the poor people of God are full of sorrow through their being chastened. Ah you cannot look back upon a barren heart in the wilderness and see your heart to be that wilderness and see that you have procured these things to yourself and not be chastened and sorrowful.

There is another thing the Lord speaks to His people; you find it in Isaiah. And O, perhaps not in the same words, but in the substance of them, He speaks it into the heart comfortably. "Say unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned". That is to say, in other words, a fresh declaration to your faith, to your heart, of the redemption work, the victory of the Lord Jesus. We believe in the redemption of Christ, never do we perhaps seriously disbelieve it, however much we may be tempted to atheism, but this is a particular speaking, the voice of redemption in the heart, so that the truth of Christ's victory is afresh made out to the soul. Perhaps it might be, and is I believe sometimes, in that word of Christ's which He spake on the cross. "It is finished". I believe that that word has been the comfort of thousands of the people of God, even in the midst of their shame and sorrow through their sin. My friends, do you know the comfort of this, that Christ has once perfected for ever the whole of the church by His death. Has it ever been laid in your heart as a piece of solid comfort, even though you may not at the present be able to declare that He has redeemed you? Has it comforted you to believe that it has been done, that Christ possesses what you need if you may but get it from Him; that sin is put away for ever for the whole church and all you need is now the witness of the Spirit to that in your heart? But if you have had this in your heart, if it has been made known to you by the Holy Ghost and you have barrenised your soul as to all confidence in your soul, as to your interest; if you have darkened your spirit and understanding through guilt, you will need it to be afresh attested by this comforting

speaking of God in your heart. It is a whisper, a gracious instruction, a blessed word that the Lord brings into the heart, and the poor sinner does feel the comfort of it.

There is another, too, that the Lord speaks to His people, and that concerns the future. Ah, I believe that from the death of Christ comes all comfort, and that when the death of Christ is expressed into the soul, then from that comes the fruit of hope and love and patience and every grace, so that there is expressed, either in word or in spirit in the heart, the truth of perseverance. Nothing will daunt the soul at such a time as he is persuaded that Christ is his Redeemer. He will look forward to that place that God has made to dwell in, and he will say in his heart - Yes, the Lord shall bring me and plant me there. He will look to that throne sometimes that Christ sits on, and he will believe that he will overcome and sit down with Christ in that throne. Heaven is before him. It was before the Israelites; Canaan was before them when they just came to the edge of the wilderness, through the Red Sea; they believed that the Lord would bring them in and plant them in His inheritance.

And there is also this, and it is very blessedly comforting and strengthening, that the Lord will deliver His people out of every evil thing and from all temptation. That is a wonderful promise, a wonderful word in Corinthians which the Holy Spirit sometimes brings into the heart in a wilderness; I know what I say here - "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God will with the temptation make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it." That looks forward and it looks into perhaps a present case. Are you in a snare? Are you, as it were, held in a net? Is the devil entangling you? Do you think and feel and fear that your particular case is different from all other cases, that it has no precedent, that there is not a case like it in the Scriptures? O then to believe, by the Word and the gracious Spirit of God, that the Lord can and will deliver, is a great thing; when He tells you that your temptation is not in the reality of it different from that which your fellow believers have in the world, then promises

to make a way of escape for you. That will not make you careless; O no, it wont make you go to sleep. What will it do? It will do what the Holy Spirit builds on that promise in Corinthians. He builds on that promise thus - "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"(1 Corinthians 10 v 12)and this "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry". (1 Corinthians 10 v 14). You will find that will be the consequence of the Lord's comfortably speaking to your heart. He will heal you of idolatry and though He will enable you to trust in Him, He will make you very heedful as to being led away into another backsliding state.

"And speak comfortably unto her". There is another thing that I think is very comforting; I think it is one of the greatest comforts that a sinner can have given to him; namely a promise of the Lord's presence. You know the Psalmist in the 42 Psalm says Thy presence is salvation. He said "For I shall yet praise Him whose presence is salvation" as it is written in the margin, and it is known to be so. If the Lord is with us in temptation, though we ought to, and shall, as taught by the Spirit, pray "Lead us not into temptation", but if the Lord is with us in it; if He is with us in trouble; if He is with us in our duties and difficulties and cares in our life; if He is with us in death; if He is with us at the Judgment Day, wont it be salvation. Good experience is a great blessing, may the Lord fill our lives with it, but the source of good experience is better, that is Christ and His presence makes experience and brings salvation, and has not the Lord said to some of you - "I will be with thee" "Certainly I will be with thee". "The Lord shall go before you and He shall be your rereward", shall gather you up. That is far more comfort to a living soul than to see every step of the way between you and your grave. I know what it is to have a fleshy desire to see my way for a long time to come, but mercifully that is hidden from us, and there would be no exercise of faith were it not for that. It is the Lord's goodness to us that it is given. O but He gives you something better than that when He promises you His presence. "Fear thou not for; I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I

will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee ..... " All these things speak trouble, weakness and need, but an all-sufficiency for those cases, and this is a comfortable word. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence". All strength, invigoration of grace, of graces of faith and love, and renewal of lively hope, all this comes from this wilderness where God is. You wont find very much vigour of spiritual life when things are very smooth, and when you are surrounded with much of an external kind in religion. But when you are brought into a wilderness and have some close dealings by the mercy of God with Himself, He dealing with you, then you may find, and will, according to this promise, some renewing of vigour of spiritual life, desire; even that renewed is a great thing, for that is renewed by being satisfied. O God does call out desire in the exercise of it from the hearts of His people. A fresh touch of His grace, a little melting by His love, does not that make your desire more vigorous than ever it was before in your shameful, slothful, languid condition? It is worth going into the wilderness for; it is worth having the pleasure of this world spoiled to you thus.

"I will give her her vineyards from thence." The new wine of the kingdom, the love of Christ; the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. This is a great promise. The love of Christ no waters can quench. There is not much of the love of Christ known perhaps in these days and when we are full of carnality and the world, what savour has the name, what taste have we for the love of Christ then? And you know it is very solemnly written of Moab, who was a type of a reprobate, that he had not gone into captivity; he had not gone into the wilderness; he had not been emptied from vessel to vessel and therefore his scent remained in him and his taste was not changed. So that it is a great mercy when God does deal with His people so as to make Himself both indispensable to them and precious to them by the taste of His love. And it seems by this word that the Lord will give much of His love to His people in the wilderness. Perhaps you may say, well that cuts me off, for I feel so little love to Him that it is my chief complaint. Well, it is a mercy for you if it is your

chief complaint, but may you and may I not rest there, but may we rather ask Him to fill us with His love.

"Her vineyards from thence" as though there should be plenty of this wine. And why is our love cold? Why, because we are so ignorant of Him. And why may it be that we are so ignorant of Him? We cannot, we must not, we dare not, say it is because of His holy sovereignty and shelter behind that. May it not be because we have not asked? May it not be because we have restrained prayer? The Lord has not said for nothing "Men ought always to pray". He has not said for nothing "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." The Lord give us grace to ask for great things of Him. If you look to yourself and to the wilderness state of your soul you wont be able to ask much, nothing at all really, as looking at that alone, but look at that first by the light of the Spirit, and then hearing the report of Christ, who He is, the life of the church; the fountain of life; the Redeemer; the Mighty God; the great High Priest. Hearing who He is by this report of faith, then you will ask great things. To be brought near to God; to know the love of God that passeth knowledge; to be filled with all the goodness of God; to have justification in your consciences; to have peace with God through Jesus Christ; to be permitted to walk with Him in peace and equity. And you may even find sometimes in your heart strength of faith enough humbly, tremblingly, to ask Him to come and make His abode with you. I have found sometimes my heart praying that tremblingly, knowing solemnly and sorrowfully how unworthy I am. But I have found, even in the midst of my dessert condition, feeling to ask Him to come and take away the dessert and abide in my heart. Ah think if He does come, even though it may be but a passing visit, He does take the dessert away; He does make a little blossoming of hope in your soul, and so He says "I will give her her vineyards from thence, that is, from the wilderness, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. This is a place in the wilderness, or rather just the other side of Jordan from the wilderness, just inside, before they had been established in Canaan, and it means "trouble". The meaning of Achor we are told is "trouble". This is mysterious, that the Lord should give this valley of conflict with devil and sin, the

enemies, the Canaanites, the inhabitants of Asia and other cities, that He should give this valley for a door of hope. Ah victories are gotten through fighting! We have spiritual enemies. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; that we do. The devil, what a mighty power and principality he has. Sin in our nature, how deceitful, how insidious, how constant, how terrible that is. The allurements of the world, how solemn they are, and in this valley of trouble, together, it may be oftentimes, with circumstantial troubles, the Lord gives this valley for a door of hope. Hope that looks out for establishment in the truth of God; that looks out for gospel liberty; that looks to have these enemies dispossessed; that looks to get the victory. And to whom, and where does it look, but to the great conqueror who has gone before. Ah, when you are fighting, the Lord the blessed Spirit gives you this door of hope, by giving you to see that the warfare is accomplished, that Christ is sat down on His throne. Then says the enemy and unbelief, "Why this conflict then, why this fighting? The Holy Spirit will explain it to you; He will explain to you that "tribulation worketh patience and patience experience and experience hope and hope maketh not ashamed because" - why - "the love of God" - and where is that? In the death and victory of Christ - "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Hope in victory, because Christ has got the victory. Hope in victory, because of union with the Victor. And you may be led into this a little in this valley. You may be shown this, the necessity of the conflict, how that the Lord will show you by that experience what He is saving you from; what He has redeemed and purchased you from. And that is a great thing because it plunges the sinner deep into debt to the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus. It makes you understand a little of that word where the Apostle says "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." We should not understand our poverty nor His riches of grace; we should not understand the cleansing virtue and power of His blood, both to cleanse guilt and to subdue sin, if we had no conflict with it. We should not know the succour that He is able

to give to tempted people if we had no battles with the enemy. Always keep in mind in this particular the direction of the Lord Jesus - "When ye pray, say lead us not into temptation". But seeing we have temptations, in them the succour of Christ is to be experienced and that gives hope, the door of hope.

There is something more wonderful here. It is wonderful to me to read it, and more wonderful to have had any little experience of it. "And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth and as in the day when she came up out of Egypt." You may at one time feel you will never sing again, that the praises of God will never be on your lips again, but sorrow and guilt and dismay and darkness and fearfulness will make up your life. And then the Lord does what I have been trying a little to describe out of this word and speaks and makes Himself precious in His victory, in His Person, in His blood, in His love, in His word, in His promise of heaven, in the comfort of His presence, and you sing. Not a song of self exaltation; not a song, the sweetness of which is derived from your consistent life, not even derived first from the subjection of your sins, but that is derived from Himself, and that goes out to Him. O the sweetness of possessing, in any degree, Christ. The riches of that portion; the blessedness of having any little measure of real ground to believe what He said, for yourself, "Because I live ye shall live also". You will sing when you know Christ, realise that He is the same now - though you have been so vile - as He was yesterday when you had the comfort of His presence, when you felt not much of your vileness, but a good deal of His mercy and goodness. O you will sing when you experience a little of His faithfulness as it is now manifested toward you, and His righteousness.

Ah the Lord wont be turned off from blessing His people. Balaam tried to curse them but he could not do it. Men, devils and ourselves, we try to curse ourselves alas, and yet there are times when we cannot help in secret, ( through the secret joy of Christ, of hoping in His mercy, of tasting a little of His grace, of looking a little into His beauty, of hoping to be with Him, though the conflict is long, the way wearisome, though we are

weak and have many fears) cannot help singing. Perhaps you do not show your song much to the people of God and it may not last long enough for that, but O in secret is there not sometimes something sweet at the bottom that sweetens all your bitters, and is not that the tree that was cast into the waters of Marah, and that makes you sing. It is like wine going down, these sweetened waters. All troubles and all difficulties then are sweetened because you have a good hope through grace in this valley of Achor.

"And as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." They sang then to the Lord; they sang His Name; they sang His victory over His and their enemies; they sang the song of faith that they would be brought through and planted in the Sanctuary. O what a song that was which they sang on the banks of the Red Sea. And this song is to be sung even by those who have gone astray and wandered from the Lord. It is to be sung by all the people of God, who, being allured into the wilderness, do hear the comfortable voice of Christ, and find in the conflict the door of hope. Yes "I to the end shall endure, as sure as the earnest is given" will you say, when this faithful Lord and His faithfulness, His unchangeable Person, His infinite merit is again, afresh made known to you. May the Lord grant us this song; may He give us submission to His Spirit's teaching; may He save us from rebelling against the firmness of His grace whereby we are emptied out from time to time, from vessel to vessel. May we be made willing to go into the wilderness if so be that there we may hear His gracious voice and get vineyards from thence, even His love, and have the door of hope afresh opened to our souls, so that we may be enabled to praise Him. There will be worship; there will be comfort; there will be strength; there will be endurance and patience, and every grace; and all, as it comes from God, will redound to His glory.

AMEN.