

Sermon preached by Mr. J. H. Gosden,
at Galced Chapel, Brighton on
Wednesday evening, 22nd May 1929.

Text: Isaiah 30 v.18.

"And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgement; Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

This solemn chapter was written to the people of Israel and by it that people was charged with unfaithfulness and folly; with turning for help to the Egyptians; for covering with a covering not of the Spirit, and for staying themselves in oppression and perversness, and seeking smooth things; seeking prophesying to be of peace when there was no peace; and in this terrible charge, brought by the prophet to this people, there is indicated the way of nature in the falseness and the recourse to Egypt of his people solemnly. He won't allow his people to presume on His mercy and on the presumption of mercy, walk loosely. He won't have his people hold the truth in an evil conscience. There are those who are bold enough, being hard enough to say, that God does not visit his people for their waywardness and sin. If He never did so my friends, we should be wayward until we found ourselves in hell. One of His greatest kindnesses and mercies is in His firm dealing respecting the turning aside and perversness, and the looking back and cleaving to Egypt that He sees in us, but it is very solemn when He does mark it; when we reverse in our practice, in our spirits His kind and gracious word in the psalm, where He has said "He will speak peace unto his people, but let them not turn again unto folly, and all perversness he marks. Perversness is a stupid willingness to go wrong. A stubbornness in your opinion, and a disregard therefore of the councils of the Lord. No child of God will walk in these things, and the Lord not mark them sooner or later to their knowledge, and that in the face of His goodness. The kind and free gracious beneficent words that He had spoken to these people, saying - "Their strength is to sit still." "In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, and ye would not." Much of the captivity that may be about us is of the flesh, and the

Lord disapproves of it. He will have his people quiet. He will have them wait on Him. He will have them go softly. He will have them walk tenderly and in His fear, and stand in His council, and consult Him continually, and when we are not walking in that way we are perverse, and alas some here this evening may be able to understand this, such is the perverseness of our unbelieving hearts as that we may know in our spirits that some things are wrong and hardly have power enough within us to turn from them. We may nurse a wrong feeling. We may nourish a froward, vile thought, and know we are wrong, and be miserable in our wrong, and yet be just swept away by it. Who can bound the issue of sin? I have sometimes looked at it and thought that but for the mercy of God, the least beginning of sin must inevitably finish in apostacy. It is so, whether we see it or not. Nothing but the mighty power of God can either forgive sin or stay it and turn the child of God from a perverse way, a froward heart. But the Lord in this chapter declares what He will do with such people. "This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant." Isaiah 30.v13. It will be instability, liability to fall like a bulging wall and that is a sad condition for a child of God, a professor to find himself in, no certainty, imminence of a fall, of a breaking- "and He shall break it as a breaking of a potters vessel that is broken in pieces." All your thin, light profession, all the hardness of your heart in your perverseness, and that sort of ungracious confidence wherewith you may sustain yourself in the stiffness of your necks, you will find the Lord break all that down. He won't have it, and there shall be nothing left, not even a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit, and if you think to get away from this breaking and this trouble, and say you will ride on the swift, then says the Lord, "They shall be swift who shall pursue you and you shall flee." There shall be a rout. You shall be driven out of all your hopes and refuges. There shall be an end of all your false confidences in the ways of perverseness. And when a man is in some measure finding himself in this case, he may read on to the end of this chapter, or a similar chapter, and see that Tophet that was ordained of old, the breath of God as a stream of brimstone kindling it and think that that must be his end when God begins to deal with his people who walk perversely. It is not a trifling matter. It is something very solemn, very

serious, and whatever you and I may gather in a perverse way and surround ourselves with to fortify ourselves, whatever is not of His Spirit, He will destroy sooner or later. I sometimes have found, and perhaps some of you have found yourselves adopting the language of the poet, praying in sincerity-"Detect, destroy what's not Thine own." and when the Lord does that, you will find perhaps you have got nothing left. You may be feelingly just stripped and emptied out and dried up. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass". "Man at his best estate is altogether vanity." We have to learn that, and it is very solemn to be brought down, to be laid low, and this is after being blessed, and perhaps not long after being blessed, to be laid low because of some perverseness in your spirit. Some incautious way or thought or word. It is very solemn indeed, but the Lord intends good to his people by these means. He won't let a man cover himself with a covering of the flesh. He won't allow his people always to walk with a perverse spirit. He won't let you hold fast to a vain confidence. He won't permit you to hold the truth in an evil conscience. He intends to do his people good, and so He brings these things down, these things wherewith the soul is as it were falsely fortified, kept quiet, and the result is just this- He will do this until ye be left like a beacon on the top of the mountain, and as an ensign on a hill. Until you are just like a stick. Like a tree, as it is in the margin, bereft of it's branches. A thing to be looked at, derelict, bare, unclothed, exposed, that is what the Lord does with his people when he will bring them back from their faults and their perverseness, to the simplicity of the gospel, to His feet, to His plan of salvation by grace. O the perverseness we have had, some of us, and how many things we may have gathered round ourselves in our minds in a way of ornamentation, in a way of Egyptian confidence, and He makes his people then know that is is not a little thing to find mercy in His sight. If we have walked perversely in this way and have forgotten His mercies to us, and have not returned to thank Him for answers to prayer and blessings bestowed, then when he takes away the comfort of those things themselves, as to all support of them to be removed from us, we may be, we shall be in great trouble. But what is it for? It is just for this - that He may manifest again His goodness, His forbearance, His mercy, His salvation, His holiness, His jealousy

and His love to his people.

"Therefore will the Lord wait." How long will He wait? How long will He look on and see his people here and there, see them under trouble, see them as He Himself by, it may be circumstances or by His word, is afflicting them; is going after them with swift arrows of convictions of being wrong here and wrong there? How long will He wait? He will wait until He sees that the work of His judgement, the work of the conviction that He brings in trouble to that child of his has accomplished His design. He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. He does it with a design to do his people good. And when has the work been done? When has affliction, when has conviction, when has the Lord's solemn power in your conscience done it's work? When a man comes just to this - that he has nothing left of his own. Nothing to call his own. Nothing but a bare desolate naked soul, lost and polluted and helpless, and if he remembers past mercies, the guilt of unthankfulness and a bad walking after these mercies in addition, he has to come like that ; and when the Lord sees him in that case, in that condition, then he is gracious. "Therefore will the Lord wait." Wait until this perverse spirit is overcome, until the prodigal is brought to his senses, until he wants his father's house more than any other thing. Until he is made willing in the day of Christ's power to be saved and to be saved in the way as appointed.

"Therefore will the Lord wait." He looks on. He is said to be in Malachi like a refiners fire. He looks on and sees this metal of His with all the dross that is attached to it in the crucible until the fire has done its work. And my friends, if any of you know what this is, you know this that when the Lord is waiting and dealing with you like this; when He crosses your path here and there and mortifies your pride and empties out your self-fulness and brings you into a state of destitution in your feelings and perhaps touches you just where you would be left free, what does it but just this- cause to rise up all the scum of your nature, all the blackness of rebellion and the Lord looks on. He looks at the amazement that you and I feel when we find this rebellion rising. He see it but He sees something more than his people see. O how often they may be ready to conclude that they are nothing but scum, that they have no grace; that surely God never could have quickened or blessed them, the Lord the Spirit could never have been in their hearts seeing there is this in their hearts-

this pride, this stubbornness, this unbending condition. O the badness of our hearts when the Lord touches us, when He does not allow us to be self-confident; when He will break down all the stoutness of our neck and when He will overcome all that false strength that we may have thought we have had. Ah, but He knows how to bring this down. He knows the amazement that a poor sinner may feel when he finds these things working within him, and He knows and sees too the inward grief and the struggle of grace. When the pot is boiling, when the scum comes to the top, He sees the gold. He waits because He has purposes of mercy to his people, because He has made them his people. He waits that He may be gracious, that is that He may manifest His graciousness to a poor destitute sinner needing, longing for that manifestation of graciousness. We are too apt to think lightly of His blessings. We are too apt to take things for granted. We are too apt to walk in a form of truth without any gracious exercise of faith, hope and love, and the Lord will make, and does make us see the necessity of coming hungry, naked, needy, bare, and lost again and again to Him for just this- a manifestation of His graciousness. He is very gracious to his people. Grace is in all His reproofs. Firmness of grace is exerted towards his people when he brings them into trouble for their sins, for their perversness, but he brings them down by these means, and makes them fit to taste His graciousness. Makes them, that is to say, humble, makes them meek, makes them tremble again at His word. Wets their appetite for the bread of life. Causes them again to see the necessity of having a Mediator between God and man.

That He may be gracious unto you. He is gracious to prodigals when they are brought to a willingness to return. O how gracious, and O my friends, how exceedingly merciful and long-suffering he is to his people to come after them and to bring them back by any means. In one psalm we find the psalmist evidently had been something in this case, saying, "By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us O Lord, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth." Then he said "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth and causeth to approach unto Thee;" and when the Lord causes a man whom he has chosen, to come unto Him, He previously makes him feel his need, his unworthiness, his great unworthiness as the prodigal was made to feel his unworthiness. He said, "I will arise and go to my father and I will say unto him, "Father, I have sinned

against heaven and in Thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants," and you know how gracious the father was when the man was brought to that. He saw him a long way off and ran and met him fell on his neck and kissed him and took great pains in His graciousness to remove his fear and his shame and his beggary, clothed him with the best robe and gave him the fattened calf and the ring on his finger and shoes on his feet and there was a merry-making. The Lord is gracious to the unworthiest sinner that is brought to turn to Him with acknowledgment of sin. So far as the scriptures go, it seems that there is only one sin that the Lord will not forgive, and concerning which the Lord never gives repentance. That is a very important word in the Epistle of John where he says - "There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it." But now poor child of God, sinful mortal, who perhaps now feels the shame, the pain, the poverty, the nakedness that you have procured for yourselves by your perversness, by going to Egypt, by desiring smooth things and refusing real things. Perversness is a great deal manifest to-day in that. O the rebellion against God there may be when the truth comes close, the rebellion of mind, even in a child of God at times. We do not like to be disturbed. We do not like our hopes tried, our graces tested. We do not like our graces tested. We do not like our case sifted, but the Lord will mark it, when your minister speaks of the necessity of knowing for yourselves the Son of God, and you rebel against it and if you are the people of God and are left to that for a while, and you go to Egypt to cover yourselves with a covering not of the Spirit of God, it will be a mercy when He rips that covering off and shows you how naked your soul is. Then you will want a covering, and the Lord is gracious in this, that He does give to people a covering. On his people He shows His graciousness by receiving confessing sinners. You have this in Hosea the 14th chapter. Perhaps some of us would hardly be able to do without the 14th of Hosea in the spirit of it. It has been a great word to some, where the Lord has said to his sinful people- "Thou hast destroyed thyself by thine iniquity O Israel, but turn unto Me. Take with you words and say unto the Lord-'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.'" And the Lord does receive his people graciously. O the graciousness, the compassion, the condescension and as one has said, the double love that He manifests towards his poor unworthy people when He has waited and

looked and waited for the work of affliction and trouble to do what He has appointed it shall do.

"And therefore will He be exalted." Exalted. Where is God exalted? We read in this prophesy that He dwelleth in the High and Lofty Place. He inhabits Eternity. How can He be exalted? Well, I believe that He is exalted when He condescends to come to a poor desolate heart that pants for Him, that is broken for sin, that is full of grief and shame for backslidings. He is exalted when He comes to that sinner again and manifests to him His mercy; and it is so in this text:—"Therefore He will be exalted that He may have mercy upon you." He is exalted in the repentance that He gives to poor sinners. He is exalted in the humility and meekness that He produces in His poor people. They get low. They despise themselves. They abhor themselves in dust and ashes, and they exalt Him in their hearts, in their confessions, in their prayers and this is what He charged his people with you see - with prayerlessness, with consulting Egypt but not Himself. With following perhaps, it may have been and is often with the people of God, their own understanding and neglecting to seek for the Holy Spirit to illuminate them and teach them and whenever we get far from the Lord and independant of Him and prayerless, He will deal with us, but then His mercy is in giving prayer and in enabling a sinner to fall before Him and seek that He will not deal with him after his sins. And He is exalted in these various ways in showing mercy to his people.

First of all He is exalted when, as He has said He will, He takes away their iniquity. Gives them a fresh sense of His forgiving love and heals their backslidings. It is a very great blessing to find yourselves brought back with supplications and with weeping and received in love to find peace with God. To find the Lord Jesus again near to you. It is a very great blessing, and the Lord is exalted in showing this mercy. It makes the man who was full of misery in a measure peaceful and comfortable again. He has lost his God. The Lord has hidden His face and was reproving him and now the Lord lets him come back, lets him find his wonted presence, lets him feel that peace and humble confidence in Him that He felt in days gone by. He will be exalted. Christ is exceedingly lifted up in showing mercy to sinful men. It is wonderful but this is true in the gospel. He humbleth Himself to behold the heavens and to look upon the earth for He made them. He is very high and His highness is terrible to sinners in the law, but He is very

much higher in a sinner's esteem when he feels undeserved mercy coming in and dissolving his heart. "He will be exalted that He may have mercy upon you."

And a further mercy is this, when He brings this sinner to Himself in such nearness as that again there are some fruits flowing out of his heart. You know when you are far from the Lord, and when you are walking in perverseness, and when perhaps in some solemn ways, the Lord begins to deal with you, there is no comfortable fruitfulness. Faith, O how very weak and negative that is. There is no sweet hope and lively hope in your soul. Love is almost a forgotten thing. You are chilled. Patience? You are full of irritability, but when the Lord brings such a person back, there is this mercy - the poor sinner finds again in his own heart that nearness to the Lord produces fruit. "From Me," he says, "is thy fruit found," and is not this mercy. O you may look upon yourselves sometimes and think now I shall go fruitless, useless, barren all my days because of this my waywardness, my recklessness, my perverseness, and then when the Lord brings you thoroughly down; lays you low again and gives you a willingness to lie low and to humbly ask if He will show you mercy again and then He brings you near and shows you how you can be fruitful again and makes you fruitful, that is, produces in your heart the exercise of faith. Faith in the bleeding Lamb. O how weak a person, when faith is negative, but when faith is again drawn out in exercise on Jesus Christ, God in His dear Son Incarnate, the Lamb slain, the Lamb provided to take away the sin of the world., then there is some feeling sense in the soul, of mercy, the mercy of God. And so with hope. Hope revives, and what a mercy it is to find the Lord as it were giving you back your hope; to be again your hope in your comfort. He is called the Hope of Israel; but one of old said- "Thou hast removed my hope like a tree." The support, the hope, the comfort. Hope is gone, destroyed through sin. But now the mercy of the Lord is in giving that hope back. In again making the poor sinner willing, and enabling him to hope in the Lord; to put his trust in Him and to hope for His mercy to be still further manifested.

And love, that is revived. It is a mercy when you can love God; when you can love the Lord Jesus, his people and His ways. It is not meritorious. It is not possible when the Lord is far off and hiding His face and rebuking, you can feel no warm love, but when He restores you, when He says, "Though I was angry with you, yet

now I comfort you." When He says- "For a small moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting mercies will I gather you." And when He confirms you in your soul in His faithfulness and kindness and love, as in the 54th of Isaiah He does to Israel where He says, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Then there is a feeling sense of this mercy. When He confirms you in that covenant love of His.

"Therefore will He be exalted that He may have mercy upon you," and this exalts Him in the heart more than anything else. No fear will exalt the Lord like His mercy will. In the 130th Psalm David says this- "If the Lord shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord who shall stand." But says he- "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared," and when that forgiveness which is with Him is believed in, then there is reverence in the heart for Him. And when that forgiveness, so undeserved, is brought by the Spirit upon the conscience, then the sinner lies low and adores that blessed One, who so freely bestows that blessing of forgiveness upon him. "For the Lord is a God of judgement." He judges righteous judgement. He does not look on the outside. He does not look at what we are before our fellow-men. He does not look on his people as perhaps other people of the Lord look upon them, but He looks upon things as they are. No deception. No mistake. And He is faithful in this His judgement, and if He makes a judgement of your case, and shows you where you are wrong, shows you where you have been perverse, where you have gone astray, where you have chosen rather to go astray than to take up a cross, then it will be a solemn business, but He has good intentions, kind merciful intentions when He deals with His people for these things. He is a God of judgement. We have no judgement, left to ourselves. We should deceive ourselves by our own judgement of ourselves, and I believe that the people of God are made at times, very seriously to deprecate being left to their own judgement of their own cases. Suppose we should make a mistake. Suppose we should think ourselves right and be wrong, our case good and it to be an evil one. We need the Lord to be this to us. The Lord is a God of judgement. He judges righteous judgement. He will never deny His own work. Never deny the exercise of grace which is in your heart. He sees it. It is His own gift. Neither will He excuse your sins. He will not cover them with excuses,

nor allow you to do it, but He will show you them. Give you mercy to come to Him. Give you repentance, and that is a mercy, and then He will cover them. Cover them with pardoning mercy. Covering them by communicating to you the virtue of that all cleansing blood of His.

And another point about this mercy is this and in connection with Him being a God of judgement, you know some of us are seriously exercised sometimes about being found of Him in peace and without spot and blameless. We want to be acceptable to our brethren, we want to walk in peace and unity with the people of God, but we want to finish right with God. We want to stand before Him unashamed, unreprieveable and unrebukable, and if you have had a sweet hope and expectation in your heart that this will be so and then you find yourself in this desolated condition through your sins, and the Lord reproving you and you are coming limping back to Him weakened and ashamed, you will want some very powerful mercy then to comfort your heart, and this is what I was going to say, the Lord does show to his poor people in His own time, when He sees the time is fit for it, He shows them that that fitness, that meekness for heaven is still the same, because the righteousness of the saints is of Himself. O, and when He makes you see and feel that, then there is very sweetly felt again that humble quietness and confidence. Before, the Lord says- "Ye would not." Now the poor sinner says, "If I may but have that quietness to go softly and humbly, confiding in the Lord, His blood and righteousness, O how glad I should be, and when the Lord gives you the warrant, when He as it were says, "Now poor tempest tossed and not comforted soul, come to Me; it is enough, I have seen your trouble, I have seen your sins and I have forgiven them, now confide in Me." "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him". That is mercy. He knows what He will accept, and He gives the sinner, by the judgement that He exerts in his conscience, to know what He will accept, and He mercifully bestows upon the sinner that which He will accept, namely, the merit of the obedience of His dear Son. Then He says, "It is enough." And the sinner says, "It is enough, I am satisfied," and it comes to pass that each one so blessed and so restored is enabled to say humbly, "Surely in the Lord, have I", a poor unworthy but restored backslider, "surely in Him, have I righteousness and strength." He is the same. He is not diminished. The righteousness which

He is the author of, is not sullied by my backslidings. I am ashamed of them, but His mercy has come over them all. He dealt sternly with me and solemnly, but it did me good, and now I keep His way.

Then we have this declaration, all covering declaration that will pick up many a child of God. "Blessed are all they that wait for Me." He brings his people to wait for Him. He waits for them. That is to say, he looks on them. Waits to see His work of grace in them. Waits to see the various troubles and exercises and disciplines have their proper effect, and by the effect of those things they are brought to wait on Him. They are blessed people. We shall never be able to calculate the kindness and mercy and goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of the Lord, in dealing with us so as to cause us to deal with and to wait for Him. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." There are many things we have to wait for respecting Him. There is one psalm containing many professions, and one petition only and that one petition in that psalm is this, "O when wilt Thou come unto me." Now that is the expression of a blessed man. A man who feels that he wants the Lord, and is earnestly waiting for Him to come. If you wait for the Lord, if you have been taught, that is to say, that you need Him, that He is indispensable, and that He has to give to you, to bestow upon you, and to be to you all that you can possibly need for time and for Eternity, then there will be some earnest waiting for Him. "My soul waiteth for the Lord," said the Psalmist, "more than they that watch for the morning." This waiting is not sleepiness. This waiting is not going and saying, "Well, the Lord will come in His own time." It means an exercise, a watchfulness. It means sometimes an earnestness. It means that the sinner feels that he cannot wait much longer and yet he is kept, fearful though he is at times lest he should fail, he is kept from saying really- "What should I wait for the Lord any longer," from going back. Now there may be a poor sinner here who can say perhaps little more than this to-night, if it were asked of you. Now what are your expectations? What are your hopes? Where are you tending? You might say, "Well, I am uncertain of everything, and if it were asked- "Why do not you go back to the world? Why do not you join a general profession? Why do not you walk in a respectable profession of the gospel and be quiet? You might say, "It is the Lord I want. It is the presence of Christ I want. It is the mercy of God, His salvation I want. He has and He alone has what I need.- Pardon,

salvation, righteousness, the words of eternal life to speak, the satisfaction alone that my soul can ever get has the Lord Jesus, and therefore I am compelled to wait for Him. Well, the scripture calls such a man a blessed man. He is blessed because he is a quickened soul, and even if there should be a backslider here who is now trembling, waiting and desiring and longing and humbling himself before the Lord, if he may find mercy and restoration, that man is a blessed man as being the subject of that grace, but particularly, waiters for the Lord are blessed because the Lord will most certainly come to them and bless them in their comfortable experience. They shall not wait in vain. No child of God, no poor repenting sinner, no stripped, destitute sinner ever waited at the throne of grace, though his eyes might fail many a time with looking upwards, never waited in vain but sooner or later such people shall find and be able to say as one of old said, "The Lord was ready to save me." He waited to be gracious. His forbearance was great in watching over me. He knew what He was doing when He afflicted me, when He troubled me, when He withdrew carnal Egyptian supports from me. When He stripped off the false covering, he knew what He was doing. He might have left me in deception to die with a false hope, but he stripped me of all this. Waited to be gracious and was exalted to show me His mercy, sweet pardoning, saving mercy.

He is a great God and the gospel is a free, mysterious, great gospel. May the Lord give us truly to know it. It won't make us think lightly of backsliding. It won't make us think lightly of sin. it won't make us light-hearted and foolish. It will cause us to revere the name of the Lord and it will make us go very softly. It will humble us before His feet and it will exalt Himself. O how thankful have I been and some of you doubtless have been many times thankful that the free grace salvation that is in Jesus Christ is for the glory of God. That He saves the blackest sinners out of hell through the precious life and death of the Lord Jesus for His own glory. It shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace. May we be the subjects of it.
