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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 21 May 1922

ISAIAH 48 v 17

"Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One
of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which
teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by
the way that thou shouldest go"

The profit in divine teaching is that it gives life and maintains life in those in whom it is. It engages the affections of the instructed ones to the instruction given for its own sake and to the Instructor for His Own sake. All other teaching, correct as it may be in the form of it, has a different effect in those in who it is found. It has a tendency to puff up. "Knowledge puffeth up". A man may love learning, he may love religion, he may love the doctrines of grace in the form of them; he may love even, naturally, the old fashioned ways in religion, and be utterly destitute of the teaching of God, utterly destitute of spiritual love for God. It is a solemn consideration. How important it is for us then to enquire whether we are under the instruction of the Holy Ghost. He is called in the Scripture a teacher of righteousness; the teacher of righteousness. We mentioned a few things this morning which God teacheth men, which they cannot otherwise learn, that is, learn them in a living experience of them. You may learn to talk about your heart, the human heart; learn to talk about sin, learn to talk about God and His ways, and Jesus Christ and His blood, and the Trinity and all that kind of thing, but when God teacheth a man these things, they are taught him, burnt in him by the teaching of God. They unite the man by faith to the instruction, however painful it is, and I would observe this, that whereas nature, even in the Lord's people, the powers of nature, may run faster than the teaching of God, yet the teaching of God is known by this, that it is sovereignly dispensed. You see one child of God for a long time held at one point of experience. One that you cannot but believe has the life of God in his soul and has been taught in some considerable measure the vileness of his own nature, his own sin and helplessness, and who is held there without, for a long time,

any breaking forth, without any continuous sense of hope. Whereas another may be taught perhaps less deeply his own ruin, but taught it truly by the Lord, and quickly obtain deliverance from that ruin by a manifestation of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, while the poor thing that lies in bondage, and wearisome darkness, and oppression, and whose eyes fail for looking upward - as Hezekiah's did - if the instruction were within his grasp, would he not break forth into liberty? Would he not look upon Christ? Would he not spare his eyes failing for looking upward? If he could break forth and break the shackles and bring in saving, comforting instruction, would he not do it? But says the Lord: "I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit". And what profit is there in holding a man in that position? Two things are taught in this; one is the sovereignty of God. Some of us, with little enough reason, looked upon the Lord's people in such a state with coldness and a kind of air of superiority - the Lord may have corrected some of us for that - but the sovereignty of God is seen here; that He will dispense comfort and teaching as He will. One thing is very blessed, that not one sinner who is quickened into life, and made to feel his ignorance, and his sin, and to confess it, and to seek mercy, shall ever fail of that infallible and complete instruction that shall bring him safely through the mazes and vicissitudes of time and life, unto eternal glory. The sovereignty of God we must own - we have to own it - not as an abstract and cold theory, but as a solemn truth under which we live. But my dear friends, consider this, sovereign love and sovereign grace are in the very first instructions that the Holy Spirit gives to a sinner. He teacheth to profit. The other is patience. The profit is patience in this case. Men learn how to possess their souls in patience here. The Lord exhausts their patience to make them wait for Him. We may view the man at Bethesda, who the Lord healed naturally, as illustrative of the spiritual teaching He imparts to His people. They try all other means of remedy. They lie at the gospel pool helpless and impotent for many years it may be. They see the water move, that is they perceive that others receive blessings, and they themselves still lie in their wearisome impotency. What would it not be for such a one for the Lord to come and teach him that He can do in one minute what 38 years of waiting could not do and merit. What patience through 38 years could not do the merit and the word of Christ could do in a moment. "Wilt thou be made whole" said the Lord. The man

instantly objected that he had no power to be quick enough, and none to take him down into the pool. Well, the Lord dispensed with the means and made him whole by a word of His power. Whether he learned graciously by that is not clear, but God teaches His people to profit by their waiting for the saving power of the gospel to be freely wrought in them. That power belongeth unto God, is a lesson that the saints have to learn. They learn it sometimes painfully when the power is withheld. You may learn it in hearing, in reading, in praying, but when the power of the Holy Ghost is withheld, then your religion, your hearing, your praying, your readings, are fruitless, and barren and the truth seems to have no life in it to you. "Power belongeth unto God". But then there are times when the Lord teaches a man so profitably, and so comfortably, that power belongs to Him, to exercise it for His blessing, and comfort, and deliverance, and help. That is a very blessed way of learning. When the Lord comes and strengthens a man in his inner man, and causes some little experience of the fulfilment of that word in his soul, that amazes him, and humbles him, and comforts him - "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His Name saith the Lord." Perhaps immediately before the poor man could not see a way; his soul benighted, his evidences dark, his sins staring him in the face, his guilt weighting him down, God absent from him. The shame of his poverty before him, the reproach of famine before him, he could not see a way out. Difficulties confronting him, expectations mocking him, yet nothing to meet them with. Duties devolving upon him yet how to exercise these duties rightly he knows not. Then in a moment the Lord appears and fulfils in the very soul, in such an one, that word I have mentioned and he is strengthened. Not in himself - straitened he has been in himself and always will be - but enlarged and strengthened in the Lord, and finds His Name to be a wealthy place and a large room in which he may walk with holy humility and liberty. "I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit". The Lord teaches His people by various means; He has means at His disposal. There is nothing wanting in God; a fullness of perfection, an infinitude of resources is in Jehovah for the salvation of His people. Nothing of all the good things that God promises His people shall ever fail to them. Does ignorance alarm you? Are you alarmed sometimes because you seem, not only not to learn any fresh truth, but to, as it were, unlearn what you thought you knew. It is an alarming

thing to feel this, and you may feel at such a time, what Hezekiah expressed: "From morning even until night Thou wilt make an end of me. Thou hast cut off like a weaver my life; I shall not see man any more in the land of the living." You may begin to feel that you are spending your days as a tale that is told; will never again see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Well, if the Lord shows you that infinite resource of wisdom and of goodness and faithfulness in Himself, that will enhearten you to pray that He will turn again, teach you over again, forgive your folly in departing from His instruction, and restore your soul.

He teaches people by means, and one means the Lord uses to teach His people to profit is His Own example. We sometimes speak a proverb - "Example teaches more than precept". Well, that is true naturally, but God's precepts, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, teach equally with example. But God does teach His people by example. It is a very solemn, but very efficacious, way in which the Lord teaches His people sometimes to profit by showing His Own example, even the Lord Jesus Christ, the poor Man of Nazareth, the Saviour. He teaches men how, by His Own example, not to please themselves, but to take up their cross and follow Him. Even Christ pleased not Himself, but the stripes and and pains due to the sins of the Church, the iniquities of all the saints, fell, met on Him. "All we like sheep have gone astray and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". Now a sight by faith of the Lamb of God receiving, and suffering under, the burden of sin, the curse of God against imputed sin, His submission to the cross, will teach a man in experience in his own soul more of submission than any other thing. If you see the dumbness, the silence, the acceptance of the cross; the meekness, the gentleness, the love, the faithfulness of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Jehovah Jesus, Emmanuel, in bearing the Church's sins, and have a hope that yours were included, at such a time rebellion against God's dealings with you will be killed. Submission will be sweet; you will feel it to be sweet to submit then to what God lays on you. Did you ever learn submission like this; submission to reproach, ignominy, evil report; submission to affliction, weakness, darkness, even to desertion, for Christ, in His example, as well as in His efficacious and meritorious sufferings, Christ was deserted. He made Himself of no reputation; took upon Himself the form of a servant. O, if the

Lord should teach us this profitably, each in our own hearts, what humility would fill us; what a looking upon the concerns of others would mark us. How we should think of others in their sufferings, for Christ suffered Himself, not for Himself, but for others. He had an eye to the Church, to her redemption when He suffered. And such teaching will instruct a man into the necessity and rightness of walking in those things which do not stumble a brother. "All things are lawful for me " said Paul, "but all things are not expedient." It is a very great mercy to have the example of Christ set before one. It is not then a cold teaching; it does not then consist in mere prescriptions and definitions, but there is a living unction and warmth and love and efficacy in the teaching, so distinct from that which can be caught up by the natural mind. He teaches men to pray by example. Jesus Christ prayed to His Father. "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him". If you see the dear Saviour of sinners in that attitude, though equal with His Father, eternally so, yet as the Man Christ Jesus in His humiliation in the attitude of earnest, agonising prayer; if you see Him on the mountain apart, praying for the church, praying respecting that which lay before Him in that solemn duty, in that awful work He had taken upon Himself, my dear friends, how it will help you to go and ask God to help you. How you will feel sometimes in such an attitude that, as Christ was not alone, neither are you. Therefore prayer is a holy exercise not to be despised. Christ was destitute of human aid when He prayed and the Lord has said He will not despise the prayer of the destitute, but will hear their cry. You wont be far from Jesus Christ perhaps when you are in that attitude, destitute though you may be. He teacheth to profit by His example. He teacheth also by His holy word. By the precepts of it He teaches men to profit. In saying what I am about to say I condemn myself in saying it, that the precepts of God's holy word are far too little regarded by us in this day. A slothful, self-satisfied state leads men to shun the precepts as if they were legal duties. As if to lovingly walk in the precepts meant one was seeking salvation by works. Nothing is further from the truth. The spirit of the precepts when wrought by the Eternal Spirit in the hearts and lives of the children of God is a holy privilege. It is a privilege for which the hearts of the saints at times find: "My soul panteth for the longing that it hath unto Thy commandments at all times". Why if the Lord would but speak a word to you and tell you what to do in certain

things, if He would but even speak a word of solemn correction to you, showing you where you are wrong; why He is contending with you; it would be sweeter to some of you, far sweeter than He should leave you to yourself, to wander on in darkness and fear and doubt.

He teacheth people to love. There is that element in divine teaching by which it may be seen to be divine teaching, that the heart is united, as I have already said, to the teaching and the Teacher. Love binds the soul to the Teacher for His Own sake; to His commandments, to His precepts, to His Person, as well as to the benefits and the things that are revealed in the teaching. All other instruction ends in self; will puff up a man. This has the essential tendency of humiliating a man in his own eyes, and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. It is sweet teaching, it is sweet humility to be thus taught and blessed of God. And the Lord teaches people to love one another. "Ye are taught of God to love one another". How is that? Why, in this way, that the Lord Jesus shows His blessed Spirit, His sweet grace, His efficacious work in the heart of another; shows it by his walk and deportment, and by his conversation, and another saint of God looks upon such a one, sees the meekness, the chastened spirit that is evinced, the love to Christ which is made manifest - not by word, but by spirit and deportment - and love flows to that person. It is a wonderful thing to experience. It is not really very common, but it is known. Love to the Lord's people because they are His people. This is the instruction, the teaching of God. "Ye are taught of God to love one another". "He that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him." And by this we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. Alas, alas, what hard carnality, sin, temptation and worldliness is in us to blind our eyes from that teaching, from that grace, from the attraction of the work of grace in another, whereby we are cooled in our love to them, the root of bitterness grows up, many are defiled, iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. Then what a wonderful thing it is to be among those who are taught of God to love the saints, notwithstanding what they are, because they are saints, and I believe this is the teaching of the Spirit in the hearts of the Lord's people, that they never see a saint that they do not esteem better than themselves. You might not like the ways of some people whom you believe to be saints, but there is something in them, some shining of

the glory of God reflected from them, that makes you sometimes ashamed of your dullness and to esteem them better than yourself. It is the work of God to bring that about, not the work of the flesh. No man hateth his own flesh. We love self naturally more than God and therefore much^{more} than we do His people. And it is profitable to love the Lord's people. The heart is knit together, the hearts of men are knit together by love. Love grows, communion grows, this way. The Lord draws near sometimes, and that is profitable. When two saints meet together and speak of the things of God, their trials, and their fears and their weakness, and their sinfulness, and their perplexities, and their ignorance, and of their helps and of their deliverances and of their longings for Christ and of the glimpses they have had of Him and of the hope they feel in Him, sometimes the Lord draws near, makes Himself real, makes their hearts burn within them, whereby they gather strength and hope and faith grow bold and love is still further inflamed, and the souls are strengthened and profit is given this way. He teaches men also by the ministry. It is a means of God. One could not really leave out the mention of this, though it is not easy to speak of it. God has ordained that the ministry, the public ministry of the word, shall be one of His chief means used by Him to teach His people. The instruction is apprehended by faith. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God". How wonderful it is to sit under the ministry and to have by God the realities of eternal things, the reality and preciousness of the gospel, the power and glorious light of it, the Person of Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Redeemer, and various truths set before you, and to have faith to mix with it, wrought in the heart, whereby the truths set forth become substance in you and you lay hold of them and are nourished by them, sent to prayer by them, strengthened by them, helped by them, encouraged to hold on by them, to hope for heaven through them, to look to Jesus and lay hold of Him by faith. It is very wonderful, the use that God makes of the lips of poor men to this end, to teach His people to profit, but He will teach men that they are the means, and that He is God; the Teacher, the source and life of instruction. He may teach people solemnly this. If any person makes an idol, God knows how to dethrone that idol from the heart. He is the God of means. He can use it, He can suspend the use of it, as He will. The Lord save us from provoking Him to suspend the use of His means when we attend upon it, by a careless and proud and idle attendance

There is no good in it; why not give it up, seeing it is not essential to salvation. Well, one thing is profitable in it, and that is the answer of a good conscience before God, and it is profitable to feel that God does not reject you nor prohibit you, but rather encourage and constrain and allow and cause you to follow Him in that holy ordinance of Believers' Baptism, to show forth, as it were, His death and His resurrection in the church publicly; to put Him on, as it is written: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh". Why, what provision should we make for the flesh in this matter? Why, we should spare ourselves this cross. We would rather be spared the mysticism which the world cannot understand and which some good people are not apparently led into. Make no provision for the flesh. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ in this despised ordinance. Everything that Christ did and that He left on record for His people to follow Him in is very sacred and ought to have our closest attention. We cannot despise this ordinance without sin. We may look at it and feel confused about it. If we are, if any here should be, may the Lord enable you to follow the example of Christ - pray to God. He prayed to His Father; He asked counsel of His Father, and His Father showed Him the way He should walk, the path of life. God can break down prejudices. God can save a man from his own natural pride and can enable him to walk in the freest, sweetest, humblest, most loving obedience, and considering it, as he does so, to be one of the highest privileges he can be indulged with in this life. And it is profitable also, not only to those who walk in it, by the answer of a good conscience, but it is profitable to the church, for it is the door of entrance into the church as it is visible. Then the church is built up. Believers walking in humble, loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ in this ordinance, these are united, united for their life to the church. There are many things against this. The devil would seek to keep the church impoverished, yea destroy it. The devil sets before a poor man a question as to whether he shall hold out to the end, and that Scripture will be solemnly in his mind, that he would seriously and soberly consider his standing with regard to the church - "He that endureth to the end shall be saved". And, says a poor man, well I do not know that I shall endure to the end, and if I should make a profession and then not endure to the end it would be worse than not having made a profession and not enduring to the end. I will make no profession. What can take that away? What can succour a poor

man in that temptation? This can: "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation". You will never keep yourself, in or out of a profession. A profession will never keep you. External forms will never keep you. Apostasy principally lies inside. Who can keep the heart? Who can help us to obey that word: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4 v 23) None but God by His mighty power; and seeing His power to save and to keep and to uphold will help a poor sinner to say - I will venture on Him. By His commandment, by His precept, by His example, in His love, I will venture on Him. Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lust, not even the lust of self-preservation.

The other point of obedience that the Lord teaches His people is that ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The profit of this ordinance is, that from time to time, it is made a means in the hands of the Eternal Spirit of quickening the memories, inflaming the affections and strengthening faith and the souls of the Lord's people in His Person, particularly in the view of His crucifixion, His death. And my dear friends, this is a very wise, and blessed ordinance. Very gracious it is of the Lord to instruct people and to lead them in the way that they should go, even through baptism, to the Lord's Table, into the church.

There are many other things in which we need instruction and for which we have to go to the Lord for instruction. "Who teacheth like Him?" "What I see not teach Thou me". "Lead me and teach me", are some prayers used by saints of old, and the Lord does lay it upon His people at times particularly to wait upon Him for the instruction into life which He only can give.

Then He teaches men to profit in this, that it is profitable to wait upon God. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait I say on the Lord" and that sometimes becomes a very real exercise and experience in the hearts of saints. There is profit in this waiting on the Lord for His coming, for His light, for the nourishment of faith, for the clearing up of difficulties, for the assuring of the conscience, for the making clear that matter that you had before you this morning in your opening hymn

'Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought
Do I love the Lord, or no,
Am I His, or am I not?

Do not despise that question. Many strong professors despise those who have that question in their minds and hearts. Better be waiting upon the Lord for the clearing up of that question than to be ever ready to assert your love to the Lord. It is not the man who talks most about love to the Lord that loves Him most. You see love sometimes shown in that very question far more plainly than by the glib words of some professors who seem able to command a stock of love when they will.

Another thing the Lord teaches His people, and it is this, that when He giveth quietness none can make trouble; that when He justifies then no person can condemn; it does not reach where justification by God is. When God forgives sin, the conscience is cleansed, that is by experience. He teaches men that "there is forgiveness with Thee", by forgiving them, by blotting out their transgressions, so that it is no theory with them, but an experience, and there is profit in that; there is profit in that. It is a piece of teaching that the soul needs frequently as it were to revert to and seek that it may be renewed again and again. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared". That is profitable for when we incur fresh guilt where could we go were this not an attested truth, that there is forgiveness with God through Jesus Christ and His blood.

"Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go". This word has in it a very sweet trend of thought, a very sweet and blessed truth. It means that the Lord does not say, now that is the way, go in it, and leave the soul at his own charges, but He goes with him, though he may not perceive Him. When the Spirit is sent to a man as a teacher of righteousness and as a guide into all truth, that blessed Teacher will never leave that soul till he is landed in glory. We are in the way now, at least some of us hope we are in the way. Oftentimes it may be fearing that we have mistaken it because darkness so often prevails, because we are so far from being what we would be, from knowing what we would know, from living as we would live, from

following as we would follow, but there is an end to the way. The end is heaven. To a city of habitation, the Lord leads His people. It is not an endless way. Though it is an afflictive path, a path in which the cross must be taken up, and sometimes is taken up willingly and freely, but there is an end to the way, though it is the way everlasting. That is to say, that that sinner is brought into the way of life here. It shall end in eternal life when all the difficulties, and all the darkness, and desertion, and pain, and crying, and ignorance, and sin and guilt, and temptation will one day be shut out of this way. No heart desponding guilt will ever be known in heaven. He leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. No uncertainties; He guides them. It may not be, guides so as that nature can follow, but faith can follow. Down to Jordan He will lead, and through Jordan He will lead, into eternity, into heaven.

Well, there are some who know nothing of this teaching, nothing of this Teacher; who do not feel their need of it; who are independent of it; who can get along - a long way in religion; have a stock of it; can always manage well without being brought into the living experience of this teaching, the teaching of God. What will be the end of such? Dying without that teaching, ignorance - eternal ignorance of God - in a deserved hell must be the end. But to those made teachable, eternal life will be the blessed end. It will be for all poor sinners, weaklings and with the fear of God, to whom the Holy Ghost gives a living desire. Such a desire separates the man from the things which are naturally attractive to him, and will always be so; things which he must lawfully handle and deal with, but they wont be his treasure; they wont be his life. He will say in secret, I want something better. He will be afraid of making a common profession, but he will be after realities. "Give me Christ or else I die". Now Christ is at the right hand of God, and if you are born again, have this life in you, your heart will be there. Prepare me Lord to stand before Thy face. Bid me come to Thy heavenly throne. Bid me pray. Teach me to pray, and give me the things which are promised to the saints, though I feel to be anything but a saint. The Lord bless you, bless every saint, bless each poor seeker, and give to those of us who feel we are empty of good and full of ill, such gifts of grace, such influences of the Spirit, such effulgencies of love and truth and mercy as shall cause us to rise and say "Surely in the

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Lord have I righteousness and strength".

AMEN.