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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton, on Sunday evening 16 May, 1926.

TEXT: ISAIAH 55 verse 3

"Incline your ear and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

We are very disposed, according to the carnality of our minds, to give our ears to things which are unprofitable to us. God gives to His people a need as I spoke this morning, and He gives to them an ear to hear what He will say. Every child of God has an ear given him by God, but the inclining of the ear to God is a bending of that ear and it does express the use in the person of that grace which is given to him, that diligence which the Lord will give to him to lend his ear, lend it only to what God will say. Unbelief will always listen to what man says or to what the devil says. Faith will always, when it is active and moves, in time bend itself towards God, and will bend the whole person toward God. It means this that we are to put off the flesh, with its affections and lusts. It means that we are not to give our ear to things which we have proved bring us into soul poverty. We are to listen to God. One in trouble in the Psalms said "I will hear what God the Lord will speak " and when God gives a person that gracious will, it is a mercy. Only faith can receive the testimonies of God. The flesh never will receive it but faith does, is compelled and enabled to receive it. As I have observed this morning, the person in whom is faith and the Holy Ghost, is shut up to this. He himself is shut up unto the faith which is to be and is revealed. What a blessing to have a listening ear. To really believe that God speaks and to hear Him speak and come unto Him. Of this I spoke one or two things. I said this morning that coming to Him was believing in Him, and believing in Him is trusting in Him, giving credence to what He says, and following His directions. He has said by His servant the Psalmist "Trust in the Lord at all times ye people. Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us" and we need a refuge, but when

our ears are inclined to hear what He says then we find this to be true - He is a refuge for us. He is to be trusted. It is a faithful word which He has spoken "Hear and your soul shall live." Hear what I say. Attend to it. Hold fast to my word. Cleave to it. Keep it diligently. Hear. To hear is not merely to be a hearer. It is to attend. Says James "Be not forgetful hearers but doers of the word." To hear is to attend. When God speaks to a man, and that man inclines his ear to Him, then that person has some work to hold fast to what God says, for there is opposition in him, will sure to be opposition against him to that word. If God has spoken to any here, for the time the word has been sufficient. It has been in you a power. You have believed it. It has been rich, it has enriched you. Strong, it has held you. You have felt it to have been a blessing for God to have spoken to you, but hold it fast. Hear. Attend to it. Paul, in the Colossians says of the people to whom He wrote, that if they were not moved away from the hope of the gospel, then they prove themselves to be in Christ, and this is so. It is he that holdeth fast, he that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

Now there are some things which the Lord speaks to His people either explicitly, through the scriptures, or in the spirit of them in their hearts, which it is necessary for them to hear, hearken to, and attend to. One of the things is this - that "the man that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, but the man that trusteth in the Lord he shall be saved." In the spirit of it, that is what the Spirit of God teaches every child of God, that it is not his care, it is not his work to save himself. That he is not able to do it, but that the Lord Himself is to be trusted in the matter of salvation. That it is grace from beginning to end that will save him. Sovereign grace, rich grace, exhaustless grace in Christ. He has taught some here this. He has made some of you, He has made me, know and feel this, that it is grace, pure, sovereign grace alone, from beginning to end. Grace in Christ alone that can save us, and it is by this grace, by faith in Him in whom the fulness of this grace is, that the justified person is to live. "Hear and your soul shall live." When we get from this we do not live, we die. If

you get on to legality, if you look to your works as a cause, as you think, of God's favour, then you do not live, you die. Your comforts will die, your stability will die, and all the strength that you may have had in true religion, that will die. Now there is a needs be for us to hear this from time to time, for our life, our spiritual life, if we live before God, if our souls are alive to Him, does need continual renewing. It gets such deaths, such opposition, is so often covered up and oppressed. Then the Lord says, and gives an ear to hear it when no other sound will suit it, He gives the sinner an ear to hear this - "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" You will live if you hear that, though you have got death in you, and death about you, circumstances that are like death to you, fears, and ignorance, you will live. Grace, grace in Christ Jesus. And, says the Lord to a poor weakling - Be strong in that. Depend on that. Draw from that. Trust in Him in whom is the fulness of grace. Here you will hear other voices in opposition, but hear what I say.

The Lord speaks sometimes to His people and causes them to hear the reproof of life. His words whenever they are spoken to His people have life in them, and His reproofs have life in them. If you carefully read some of the Psalms, you will find that the Lord deals with His people, speaks to them about their sins. He really deals with them, chastises them with the sword that goes out of His mouth. He discerns them to themselves, shows them where they are wrong and mercifully calls them to account. Calls them to confession and this is to be heard. If we are walking in any wrong thing then it is our mercy to have this voice of the Lord and to have an ear to incline and hear what He will say. Habakkuk says "I will hear what the Lord will speak to me and what I shall answer when I am reproved," and it is a reproof of life. Better get the reproof of life from Christ's lips in your heart than to be lifted up with false comfort. We should like to hear nothing but that which comforts us, but we have a good deal in us which the Lord will deal with us about. He intends to cleanse His people. He intends that they shall be

for His glory. He will not have them walk frowardly. If they do, then He will walk frowardly with them, and speak against them to them.

The Lord speaks to His people sometimes in and by circumstances and gives them an ear to hear by circumstances. Providences - He is in them. Though the world, dead to God, do not hear His voice in them, the people of God are favoured at times to observe His hand, and to hear His voice. Providences that may seem to be against you. You may rebel because they are against you. You may begin to question the wisdom and goodness of God in your heart and this will bring about a state of great barrenness of soul and you may say in your spirit, in your rebellion, that you have a right to be angry with this or that circumstance. Now if you are a child of God and live like that for a season, the Lord will deal with you. He may deal with you very solemnly. Bring you to account. Show you your foolishness. Make you, it may be, tremble, then in His mercy give you an ear to hear and to incline to Him. "Lord" you will say "I have been a fool. I thought my wisdom best. I thought that this was not right, but Thou art right. Thou art righteous and I am escaped," and the person lives. It is not a case to be envied, the case of a person who never hears the Lord speaking to him in a way of reproof, because I do not believe that there is a child of God who at some time in his life does not need to be spoken so to. Why, we are disposed by nature to ruin ourselves every moment. Constantly our flesh is clamouring to undo us, unbelief to depart from the living God, and when that flesh, that unbelief for the time has the ascendancy, then, but for the mercy of God in hedging up our way, in spoiling our schemes, in speaking reproofs to us, in one way or another, we should be ruined, but the soul lives, lives in conviction of its sin. Lives by the mercy of God in confession of it, and he lives too when the Lord graciously applies to him His pardoning blood. Every new sense of that, every fresh efficacious atoning sacrifice that is put on the conscience is living. It brings life and peace and comfort to that soul. Hear, submit, attend, humble yourselves under

the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time. This is the word of the Spirit, and the Lord is pleased with those who hear. Helpless they are to do any good to themselves; ruined they are, and self-destroyed, but He is pleased with them when they hearken. Obedience He is pleased with better than with sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

And my friends, all that the Lord can convey of blessing to a poor sinner He conveys through faith to them. Faith in Jesus Christ. O the words, the living words of Christ, and how the sinner lives who receives them. The word of direction. Hearken for, and hearken to, this. We need it often. We need to know when to go and when to stay, when to speak and when to be silent. Can you manage yourself? Can you manage your life? If you do for a day you will get into confusion and death. The man who can manage his business without God, the man who can manage his family concerns without God, is a person who does not live. Hearken, hear, and your soul shall live. Incline your ear and come to Me for wisdom. Come to Me for strength; come to Me for grace; come to me for courage to do that which is right. All in Jesus Christ, and the poorest, weakest, neediest sinner is invited to come to Him for all he needs.

I spoke this morning of a little of two great things for which a person who is thirsty for God comes to the Lord Jesus at the throne of grace, namely, for the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins and for mercy. Now there are other things for which the person is to come and does come to the Lord Jesus, and he lives when he comes. Prayer is the christian's vital breath. He lives; lives by faith upon the Son of God, and lives in prayer at the throne of grace. This is by the goodness and mercy of God, by the power of grace communicated to the soul. He comes to the Lord Jesus Christ at times for this, for the supply of spiritual knowledge that will make him wise unto salvation. Who can find out the knowledge of God? He is holy; He is high; He is invisible, and yet God must be known. Have you ever come for that? Did you ever ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you? Are you

pained because of your ignorance often? Come to Me, and I will reveal Myself." I will say "behold Me" I will manifest Myself unto thee" says the Lord Jesus and this is a distinct thing for which the child of God comes to Him. You will never learn to know the Lord by any way except by the way of His revelation. None can know the Lord, how rich He is, how full He is, how glorious He is, how sufficient He is, but as He reveals Himself to that person. Therefore if you feel ignorant of Christ and if sometimes you say "O that I knew Him", go to Him, wait on Him, pray for a revelation of Him to your soul. Ask Him to reveal Himself, to make Himself manifest, to fulfil His kind promise - "I will come unto you and will manifest Myself to you" because the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to a person brings all the life that he wants. He is the life of the soul, and when Christ is revealed to and visits a sinner, that sinner does really live. He lives in love. He loves the Lord with mind and heart. He trusts Him. He lives in peace. He has a strong confidence when the Lord manifests Himself to Him, as He does not to the world. Your soul shall live.

I spoke also of the Holy Ghost this morning. The Holy Spirit is sent. He comes from the Father in the Name of the Son, and the person lives. Yes, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, is that Blessed Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that makes one free from the law of sin and death and He exercises that gracious law in the heart, whereby the person lives now a life of liberty. Bondage is sad. Bondage is troublesome. Bondage cripples you and who does not know that? The law brings bondage. The law holds a person. Sin brings captivity, and that holds a person but when the Lord Jesus, by His good Spirit, comes and exercises the gospel law in the heart, then that person lives. He lives, as I said, in hope. He lives in a degree of liberty. He lives in a gracious, humble confidence in God and this confidence is expressed, as from time to time, and constantly he applies to Him for help in every time of need. A small matter, a great matter, any matter will be a matter that you will take to the Lord when you so live. Your soul shall live. You shall be delivered not only from

condemnation, but you shall live here even as a conqueror over these besetting sins that threaten to rule over you. It is not life to live under the power of sin to a child of God. That is death when any lust, any sin, any vanity, any worldliness prevails over any child of God, that is death to him. You know it who fear God. You cannot entertain foolish thoughts, angry thoughts, unbelieving thoughts, lustful thoughts, covetous thoughts, or walk in any evil way and not find death. Those who have lived before God know that this brings death to them. Any worldly pleasures indulged brings death to them and in passing I may say this, that is the reason why a child of God who seeks to walk in the tender fear of God does not walk in some things that may be lawful, because he knows they are not expedient. They are death to him. Worldly pleasures, innocent pleasures, as people call them, pleasures of which you dare not say that they are unlawful, yet you must say, and do say, as feeling it, they do not comport with life. They are deadening. Now my friends, when the grace which is in Christ Jesus is communicated in some good measure to a poor child of God, when a struggling person who finds his worldly mind, his covetous heart, his lustful thoughts rising and threatening to prevail, then when he comes to the Lord with them, when he confesses them, and cries to the Lord for the fulfilment of that promise -"He will subdue our iniquities" that person lives. He is not under sin. He has the sin in him. It is powerful, but he is led to take it to the right place. Take these tyrants to the Lord Jesus, poor troubled child of God. If you have sins you cannot manage and I know what this is. It is a sad and painful experience, but take them to the Lord. Ask Him to subdue them and He can and He will, and He does and when He does you live. This life of grace communicated from Christ to the soul is very pleasant, very pleasant to faith. O how happy a poor sinner may be for a season when he has this victory over sin. It is a source of happiness to him. It is not the source of his salvation, and it is not the ground of his hope of acceptance with God, but it is the source of happiness. Your soul shall live. You shall live here. You shall live in

a measure an experience of communion with Him in the Sanctuary, in the secret place. You shall live, and there is satisfaction here. They shall be satisfied with the provisions of My house. That is living. O it is living. It is the fare of those who are favoured by God to know His secrets, to come into His banqueting house, and that is living, living in the love of God, feeling that love shed abroad in your heart, having communion with God and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Live, you will then a little in the knowledge of God, for it is the Son who declares His Father's name to His people. The secret name. Ah my friends, they cavil about the reality of the relationships in the Trinity, and so will all men cavil until they are taken into that secret place where Jesus, Son of Man, and the true and only Son of God, makes known His Father's Name, and then you live. You live in peace. You live in a sense of security then. This is the abundant living that the people of God are to have, for Christ said "I came that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" and it includes this. I will name it, not that I have had much of the experience of it, though I hope I may say honestly a little, but it includes this, living as a child. A child of God. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God" Now my friends, this Spirit that breathes adoption, breathes in the soul the spirit of a child, is living, a living Spirit, a humble Spirit. The person lives then in simplicity. He lives in contentment. He lives in desire. He lives as he looks upon and worships the Eternal Son of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, the first-born from the dead, that elder brother. He lives. I wish I could enter more into this point, but it is when you come by the Holy Ghost, take your place humbly in the family. Your soul shall live eternally. Not only shall you live that life of a pilgrim, that struggling life, that journeying life, not only shall you live that life in which from time to time you get a little rest, a little respite, a little deliverance, a little sense of the Lord's

love and mercy, but your soul shall live eternally, who by the grace of God come to Him. Ah my friends, the Lord does not begin to show mercy and salvation and goodness to His people to leave them, therefore He adds here "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. An everlasting covenant. This making of the covenant is the ratification of it in the person. The covenant that was made with Christ in Eternity, in which every child of God was included, for God, the Trinity, made this covenant in respect of the whole election of grace. That covenant is to be ratified in every individual child, elected by God. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" and this making of the covenant, I believe is just this - the uniting in an experimental way of the poor sinner to the Lord Jesus, who is the Head of the Covenant - the Son of God, whereby he has passed under the rod into the bond of the covenant. Union with Christ. Then the person who is so united to the Lord Jesus Christ experimentally, feelingly, who feels the Lord in his heart the hope of glory, feels he is rich in the possession of Him who made the worlds, the Son of God as his Lord and his Saviour, his life, that person does live. There is no end to an everlasting covenant, and there is no exhausting all the blessed rich blessings it contains, though it shall fill every child of God with eternal glory, though it shall communicate all needful grace for the life here, yet the covenant can never be exhausted. It will take the people of God in, and will land them in eternal glory. Even the sure mercies of David, the holy things as the margin reads, the blessings, the rich blessings of the gospel, all of which are in the purpose of God in Christ, and shall find an experience in the children of God. What God has purposed His people to possess, they shall possess. There shall be no missing. This covenant is ordered in all things and sure. It was David's solace in his last hours, this covenant, and it is the solace and the salvation of every child of God. The covenant sealed by the blood of Christ. The covenant which is Christ Himself. I will give Thee for a covenant of the people and David said of it when he was

greatly disconcerted about his family, he said "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant which is ordered in all things and sure and this is all my salvation and all my desire" and so it will be yours and mine if you have Christ and the good will of God in Christ, the love of God in Christ. What can separate you from Him? Things present, or things to come, persecutions, death or life. Nothing can separate from this covenant, from the blessings of it, from Him who is the Head of it - Jesus Christ. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. You may say, some of you, but this is too high for me, too great for me, too rich for me. If you are a child of God you will have it. God does not love some of His people more and some of His people less. He loves them with a perfect, holy, causeless, everlasting love. It is not that some shall have part of the covenant and be partly taken in and others betaken right in. Each one shall be in this covenant and have all the blessings of it in their own persons. There is a difference here. Some of the children of God have much more comfort, more confidence, and more sense of the Lord's blessing and favour and presence than others in this life. There may be many reasons why this is so, but though that is so, yet the Lord loves all His people alike. They are equally dear to Him. There is no respect of persons with Him. He loves His people. He loved them eternally and because He loved them He sent His Son to be their Saviour, and ransom them from death. He made a covenant in their behalf with His Son and the Son came in His love to ratify the covenant, to secure it by His precious blood, so that if you are saying now, any of you here, who feel unworthy of the least notice of the Lord, that this is too great for you, listen to what He says - "Incline your ear, you thirsty, hungry, penniless, famishing soul, incline your ear to what God says. Listen to Him" What does He say? Why He says that He will pardon sin. He says that He will justify the ungodly, freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He says "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. This covenant secures the people of

God. It secures their coming into it in their experience and it secures every blessing that is in it for them. The terms of it are these. "I will not turn away from thee to do thee good, but I will put My fear in their hearts and they shall not turn away from Me" It holds God, if I might so speak, to the sinner. It holds the sinner to God. It makes the sinner a saint. It will take Him to glory.

Even the sure mercies of David. Paul in preaching at Antioch quotes this and quotes it in respect to the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus and in the Philippians you find him having this great desire - That he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. The soul lives when the body dies but the body is to live. The person is to live. The person is to enter into eternal glory. Yes, there shall be that glory brought to the person. The person shall be a holy person one day. Christ is in heaven, a real man. The man Christ Jesus, who died on Calvary is there, and everyone for whom He died shall be there, not only as to his soul but as to his raised and glorified body. "Even the sure mercies of David". They are sure. Nothing can frustrate them. Nothing can invalidate them. Nothing can alienate them from the people of God. Sin cannot do it and I do not speak that, God knows, I do not speak that in order to excuse sin, for the gospel makes no excuse for sin, but sin cannot invalidate, cannot alienate from the people of God, the covenant blessings of Jehovah. It includes sanctification. Christ is made this to His people. "Who of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" and people who fear God want sanctification. That blessed promise in the sixtieth of Isaiah has attracted many a child of God, and made him feel sad. It is said there "My people shall be all righteous" Well, my friends, this covenant secures it - sanctification. Christ is made this. He is made it in the soul when He is revealed there. The truth of God as it is in Christ. The gospel in the power of it is a sanctifying gospel. Some in the last days will have the form of it. The form of godliness but denying the power. Walk inconsistently

with the name of Christ on their lips, but a child of God seeks the power of it, the power of it not only to the comfort of his soul, but the power of it to sanctify him, to separate him. The power of God unto salvation is this gospel. May the Lord make it so to us.

Now there are some to whom this word is not attractive because they are full, as they think, and increased with goods and have need of nothing. They do not hear the voice of God. Calamities, judgments, providences, the scriptures, they hear Him not in all these. They hear reason, and by their reason they form to themselves a God. They speak peace to themselves. They reason about calamities and circumstances and things and they manage well, as they think, but they have no room for Christ. No need to come to Him for wisdom, or mercy or salvation, but of these it is written in the scripture, when they shall say to themselves peace and safety, not wanting a refuge, then sudden destruction shall come upon them as travail upon a woman. May the Lord prevent it in His mercy. May He grant unto us this great blessing of hearing His voice, of coming to Him. He says a little lower down in this chapter - "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near" and when that blessed, that gracious command has in your heart the power of the Holy Ghost, when it is put there, then it will be your mercy to follow it. When He calls, His people to seek His face, He does not call them in vain. They get what they come for. You will get what you come for, seeking sinner. I do believe, I must say this, that to praying souls Christ always grants more than they can express.

"Incline your ear and come to Me". Listen to, not to anything that will keep you away. Listen to, not to your proud humility that will keep you away, but come to the Lord just as you are. Ask Him to save you. If you are ignorant, then ask Him to teach you. If you are guilty, then ask Him to purge your conscience with that precious blood which can do it, and which alone can do. "Come to Me"

Well my friends this is a great invitation, and He is an infinite inviter, and some of us can say that there have been times when we have proved Him as good as His word. We have got what we have gone for, and it has been more than we could express and it is to be more. Yes, there is to be a fulness. This covenant has a fulness in it and that fulness shall fill the church throughout all ages, and all shall be for the glory of Christ. May the Lord grant us each an interest in it for His Name's sake.