

Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton, on Sunday morning 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".

God, in dealing with men, deals with them in such a way as makes each one so dealt with, need the gospel. Need it in the solemn feeling of their souls. It is He who kills and wounds and drives to destruction those whom He will, and does make alive and heal and bring again. The creation of the Holy Ghost in men, the new creation, is a life within a man. A new life which he forthwith lives, and which brings him to continual necessity. It is a life that gives him a realisation that he has an immortal soul. It is a life that causes him really to know that his own things, his own name, his own uprightness, and goodness are not sufficient to stand before God in and with. The truth of having to stand before God, being made known to him, he knows that his soul must live. He knows that he must meet God and also, he has this life in him that cannot be satisfied without that God before whom one day he must stand and give an account of himself. It is not a life that is all and only a life of tormenting dread, though there is torment, and there is fear in it, but there is in this life a craving spoken of in this chapter as a thirsting after God, and they are blessed people who have lived, and by the mercy of God are brought to have this thirst, this real desire for the living God. Very few people, evidently; plainly, very few people have any real spiritual thirst and hunger for the living God. Therefore men are easily satisfied to-day. The worldling attempts to find, and thinks he does, but does not really find satisfaction in forgetting God and in seeking to obtain pleasure out of the world. What he possesses he misuses. And the religious person is easily satisfied. All he wants is a respectable name. To be called a christian. Not to be disturbed. To be thought well of and he is satisfied, but

eternal dissatisfaction, eternal emptiness, eternal curse, awaits every person who, in this life, can be always satisfied without God.

I believe the people of God are the only people that ever know what real satisfaction is, and when they are satisfied from and with God, by His coming to them, they are satisfied with everything else. This discontent and all this storm which we have just now seen would not have been possible if men feared God. The oppressed person where there are these would have said "I am oppressed but my oppression and my cause of oppression I do not, I will not, vindicate, but will lay it before God." He knows the case. He will judge righteous judgment, and others who have power, and who are defied because they have power by some, they would not seek to vindicate their cause but would pray before God. The dissatisfaction, the hatred that is in the world is a consequence of unbelief. I say these things not from barely observing what took place, but from feeling that which is in my heart, for what has boiled over in the world recently is in our nature - hatred, malice, spite, bitterness, poison of asps, forgetfulness of God, pride, covetousness, all this is in our hearts, my friends, and we are often defiled in our consciences when angrily we may look at the boiling over of these things in others, and in a self-justifying way, scorn them. We are not a bit better but for the mercy of God to us, and when God teaches a man that, and not only that, but touches him, makes him feel that of all sinners that ever defiled the earth under them, they are the vilest, the blackest, they are peculiar sinners, then they will need a gospel that is free. A gospel that is plenteous, and that is powerful and such a gospel is the gospel of God's grace.

The Lord here calls upon people who are disturbed, who are threatened in their lives because there is nothing can satiate them and satisfy them. People who hear many voices but none of them can lead them to peace - the voice of sin, the voice of the law, the voice of Satan, the voice of the world they hear, and all these make such a noise. God calls upon these persons who have no rest in their bones, who find conscience will give them no rest; who find that no good works and no religious duties bring life and

satisfaction and healing to their souls. He calls upon such people to incline their ear to Him. He has something to say to them. What a great thing this is. Beyond all our conception great, is the condescension of the holy, pure, almighty and just God, in having something to say, and saying it to poor, wretched, hell-deserving sinners. He does have something to say "Incline your ear"; "Listen", as if He should say, "and come unto Me". Incline. Lean to, as it were. As if He should say "Now My voice, and what I say is infallible, I am righteous. My word alone is infallible. My truth alone is undeceiving. I am truth." "I speak righteous things, and I have somewhat to say to you poor tempted, driven, weak, guilty, ruined and hopeless soul, I have something to say to you, incline your ear, and that not afar off, to hear what I have to say in a rational way, to hear it merely in a reasonable way, but come unto Me, I will have you come near." This is, if possible, a greater condescension on the part of God, to call sinners, to invite them near. If He should speak to a sinner at a distance, if He should say anything to him but cursed, and depart ye cursed, that is a wonderful mercy and condescension, but when He will have a person, a sinner, come near to Him and hear things that are secret, have some intimacy with Him, be enabled, caused to approach unto Him, to come near, this is condescension, this is mercy - "And come unto Me."

Now there are some things, toward which, as God speaks them, we are to incline our ears. Yea, all things that He speaks, and He speaks by and in various ways. He speaks to a person by His law. It is not only the voice of conscience in a man that kills him, but the voice of God in the law that kills him, for natural conscience, though it has a voice, natural conscience can be satisfied with natural answers to the objections that it makes, but God, speaking in and by conscience in the law, can only be answered by Him who opens His mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. When a person feels this in his soul and hears that he is a dead man, hears that is to say, the sentence of death, receives it, is condemned in his soul; as he reads the scriptures, he is condemned; as he tries to pray, he is condemned; as he meditates, he is condemned; as he looks

backward to his very birth and his life through, he is condemned; as he looks forward, there he is condemned; as he looks inside, he is condemned; that person, having that voice living in him of condemnation, is compelled to listen to it. Then there are other voices in him. The voice of the enemy who says, "despair"; the voice of legality that says "do this and do that and then you may hope", but he is shut up and this is not the work of a day, but a work that may take years. He is shut up to the voice for which he is led to listen, the voice of the Lord Jesus. He is, my friends, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, who says "Come unto Me", for God calls sinners to Himself to deal graciously with them. He calls men to Him that they may hear not only as they have heard when He sends it, the law. He sends the law to them, but He calls them to Him with the law, and condemnation by the law in them, to Himself to hear something different; something comforting, something better. And "come unto Me. I, who am the Lord of life and glory; I, who once died, that sinners might live; I, who sit on the throne of grace, am the propitiation for sin, whom God, the Father, hath set forth to be a propitiation" "Come unto Me, the Mediator". This is a very inviting, despair-killing, a soul strengthening invitation when the Holy Spirit of Christ speaks it to a person in a condition such as I have briefly named. "Come unto Me" you who are full of storms; you whose religion seems confused; you who feel you do not know what truth is; you who fear being deceived for Eternity - "Come unto Me and I have all that you want - satisfaction. I have merit. I have the words of life, come to Me." This, I say, is something more and different from God speaking in the law, for when He speaks to a person in the law, though He comes near to him, it is to judgment, and it is solemn. He has no nearness to God except the nearness that God causes him to feel by His wrath. Here there is a change. The person, who often would have hidden himself from God, now finds this before him. An open way to God and an inviting God, an attracting God, no less holy, no less pure, no less Almighty, but God as manifesting Himself in and by that precious Person of His Son in our nature. "Come

unto Me, sinner" Coming to the Lord Jesus Christ is believing in Him. You will never believe in Christ in a way so as to receive from Him what you want while you believe in yourself. All the while you have faith in yourself you wont have faith active in Christ. God makes His people hate themselves, distrust themselves. I have lived to distrust myself exceedingly; am afraid of my thoughts; afraid of my strength more than of my weakness, often; am afraid of my nature. Ah, there is no trustworthiness in self, and all the while a person can stand in self-confidence, that person really, whatever he may profess, does not trust in, believe in, depend upon, or come to the Lord Jesus, but O how glad is one who finds himself his greatest terror and his worst enemy, and who finds that sin is not only in him, but threatens to prevail, and who finds that, notwithstanding he knows sin to be wrong, yet he cannot divest himself from it, who knows that the law speaks right, though it condemns him, and that the devil, who tempts him to despair, charges him with what he cannot answer, how glad is such a person to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in the testimony of Him in his heart by the Holy Ghost. And here is the power and work of the Holy Ghost - "Come unto Me" Response to this is by the power of Him who speaks it. Christ's Spirit speaks it into a poor sinner's heart. O what a power there is in this invitation, and what a case it comes into. What destruction it comes into. What a lost sinner it comes into. What a hopeless case it speaks to and the power that it puts, the strength, as Job speaks, that it puts in the man, enables him to incline. "Incline your ear" Listen, not to the voice of the devil, who says you ought, it is proper for you to disbelieve and despair; or to your misinformed judgment that says to you - you ought not to listen because you do not know for certain that you have an interest in the Lord Jesus. Listen, not to those voices, but listen to Me: I speak; I have authority to speak; I am God. In My mouth are words of life, and though the whole world should contradict what I say, what I say in respect of you, though you at present cannot receive it, will stand. "Come to Me. Incline your ear to hear and believe what I say." How do people come when they come to the Lord Jesus Christ? They come to Him

with broken bones. They come to Him with a weeping spirit. They come to Him with sadness for a mis-spent life. They come to Him with ignorance and darkness often. They come to Him and flee from their vain thoughts, and yet bring their vain thoughts with them, because they have no strength to cast them out. They come to Him with the world in their hearts, though they turn their back on the world. This is how people come to the Lord Jesus. They come to Him in prayer. He chooses them and causes them to approach, and because that is so, therefore they can believe. It is a spiritual act. An act of the soul. An act that has, if I might speak, two impulses in it. First there is necessity in the case. A necessity in your case that makes the Lord Jesus Christ absolutely indispensable to you. You must find Him. You must have Him. You must possess Him. You must know Him. You must be in Him or be eternally dissatisfied. Well, necessity is a great thing when that necessity presses. It has an influence, an impulse in the soul. Hunger will stir a man. Thirst will make a man move. Real desire will send a man after the object of it. But then the other impulse is the attraction. Christ is attractive. He is attractive to a person who can find no attraction elsewhere. Ah, we find plenty of attractions elsewhere, alas for us, but the Lord makes these attractions ugly to us; makes us realise at times how the very best thing that can attract us, that is not the Lord Jesus Christ, is useless to us. He spoils the world. He spoils idols. He breaks them. He makes a man see that Christ is sufficient for him, and that Christ only is sufficient for him, and so he goes, believes, is compelled to believe. "Jesus" says one in a hymn, "my soul's compelled to flee, from all its wrath and curse to Thee", and you go gladly, though you go full of shame, though you go self-condemned, though you go weak and guilty. You will go gladly when this Person comes in His Spirit and says "Come unto Me". My friends, this is personal, it is individual, it is spiritual, it is in the heart and a man comes. The preparation for this is in the work of God's Holy Spirit by the law, and then, having thoroughly broken up the fallow ground, having thoroughly killed a person, and shown him how there is no ground for him to look for anything but the curse in himself by the

law, then the Lord Jesus appears, reveals himself, and calls the sinner to Himself. O what a door of hope this is. What an object of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, and how mighty is His word in the heart. If the Lord says to you "Incline unto Me" If He says "Hearken to what I have to say to you" He will obtain obedience. You must listen, and His voice, still small voice though it is, is more penetrating to the soul than the clamour and noise and strife of tongues which before you were confused by. "Come unto Me" and when you come you will come for reasons, you will come for something. O yes, people do not come to the Lord Jesus Christ lazily, and indifferently; when they come, they come for something.

First, for mercy. No mercy out of Christ. No pity from a holy and just Almighty God for a sinner out of Jesus Christ. O but pity, compassion, mercy, help, all in Jesus Christ for the blackest sinner who lives to feel his need of mercy, and comes for it. You wont come as a pharisee if you come to the Lord Jesus. You may come confessing you have got a pharisaic spirit, but that will be part of your guilt, part of your condemnation, but you will come for mercy. The man in the gospel, he stood afar off. He had not got any religion; daren't look about him. Perhaps did not know hardly the presence of the pharisee by his side, but stood afar off; would not look up so much as to heaven, but smote upon his breast and said "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is simplicity, stern and solemn and living simplicity, which the Holy Ghost puts into the heart of all the people of God. They come for something. It is not for religion and for ornaments that they come. No, it is for mercy, and the mercy of God is rich and free and necessary, indispensable to a sinner who feels himself to be a sinner. Mercy. What is mercy? Why, it is pity and deliverance. It is help. It is that the poor thing who feels condemned may not be condemned. It is that one who deserves the curse may be blessed. It is that one who fears the wrath of God may feel the smile of God in his soul. This is mercy, and the poor sinner comes for it. Sometimes perhaps you may be so condemned in your soul that you think if the Lord God will only just remit the sentence it would satisfy you. If only He would give you, as it were,

time to recover strength, it would satisfy you. But O, the mercy of God, my friends, is such, He does not show a little mercy, but great mercy, endless mercy, everlasting mercy, full and free mercy does God show, exercise towards sinners, through Jesus Christ. Come for mercy, poor sinner. Have not you a reason why you should get it? All the better for you though you will feel it to be a solemn thing if you have got no reason in you why the Lord should shew mercy to you, and yet you must have it. Here a person takes his life in his hand. He goes with that in his hand which, if God marked it, would mean he would be eternally condemned. He goes with confession, that is to say, when you ask for mercy you confess something, and that is, in a word, that you are a sinner. It is not a little thing to be a sinner against God. It is not a small thing to have that condemnation, that name. O my friends, to be a living sinner against the living, holy God, this is solemn and you need mercy. Mercy for sins committed that the judgment of God might not come on you for them. Mercy in respect to your sinfulness that God would if He can deliver you from that.

Then you will come to the Lord Jesus Christ for this, as it is shown to be obtained, for the Lord always leads people according to the scriptures; always leads them to ask what is His will to give. You will come to the Lord Jesus Christ for a knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of your sins, and here is heaven. Heaven for one who knows what hell is in his conscience. O, the hell that sin is, that guilt is, that being a sinner is, only men to whom the Holy Ghost reveals that awful truth, can know. But, my friends, the heaven is the sweeter. It needs a great power in the Holy Ghost for a poor wretched sinner to come for this, but you cannot help coming if you see what is in Jesus Christ - that is redemption. Redemption is that through which, by which, God forgives the sins of coming sinners. "In whom" says the Apostle, having the experience of it, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" Now faith has something, if I might speak so here, to work upon in coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is occupied in considering this as it is manifested - the redemption that the Lord Jesus Christ has

accomplished; the price He has paid; the work He finished. "Come to Me". You cannot go to the Lord Jesus Christ without you know something of this redemption, for when He calls a sinner to Himself, He always makes somewhat of Himself known. He is a capable Saviour, and a wise Saviour, an almighty Saviour, a suitable Saviour for sinners. The only Saviour set forth by God to be the propitiation for sin. "Come unto Me, you who are condemned, and ask for forgiveness, and upon this ground that I have suffered and bare the sins of a number that no man can number of men, in My own body on the tree. I died; I, the infinite One, the Son of the Father in human nature, I died". O, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is that ground of hope that is put into the heart of every coming sinner, that as he comes to God by Jesus Christ, he finds an answer. O he must have a ground of hope in coming, and it is this that He who calls - the Lord Jesus; He who draws - God the Father, that great God did set forth His Son, and send Him that He might, by death, be the propitiation for sin. Therefore, there is in this invitation a promise - "Hear and you shall live" It shall live that is, and what a promise it is. You shall not be condemned. You shall be justified. "Righteousness" we read in the scriptures, "delivereth from death", and this life which is given, the ransomed life, is by the ransom price of Christ, even His obedience unto death.

"Your soul shall live" Why my friends, this promise contains in it all that your soul can desire. Life. What is it? First and foremost it is the favour of the living God. No life without that. If you have not the favour of a holy, an infinite, and just God, then there is no life. You may have an existence, but no life, no satisfaction, no peace, no security, no fulness, no proper need of life without this. Your soul shall live, shall live in my favour and why? What is the reason? Merit? What makes the difference? Goodness? Yes, merit and goodness, but not in the poor wretched coming sinner but merit and goodness in the Lord Jesus Christ. Come for it. Come for the life; come for the justification; come to receive life, you who feel

dead. Your souls shall live. It is the Son of God who speaks, speaks for His Father, for all the words that He speaks are the words which the Father taught Him to speak. In Him is life, and the words of life are given to Him to speak, and He says, says for God - "You shall live" There is no fury in God, because I am the propitiation. He is propitious, you need not fear. You are guilty, but there is forgiveness. You are condemned by the law, but there is something - righteousness, without the law, in Him revealed, and you shall live. My friends, you who may now even be feeling guilt, which is death, if the Holy Spirit should but give to you to see by faith and hear in your soul this blessed Inviter - what He is, and what He says, then your death you will go with, and believe, and never be satisfied until that death is swallowed up. "I am the resurrection and the life". Not only did I die, and not only did I rise again from the dead and am sat down with My Father in His throne, but I am the resurrection and the life, and I will give you this life. Though you are dead, yet you shall live. He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. So says the Lord Jesus. You shall live too in hope. Ah, it is a great thing not to be without hope. I know what it is to be hopeless, and some of you may know what it is to be hopeless, and what an awful state it is to be in. Dying sinners without a hope, and how can a sinner hope? How can a sinner hope apart from the blessed High Throne, Jesus Christ, who is the sinner's hope? And you will live in hope. What of? Why, as we were reading, of the glory of God. There is nothing, nothing my friends, beyond God. If God favours you, if you are in His favour, if He blesses you, then you have all that can satisfy, and that can enrich your soul, and you live in hope of entering into that fulness. Your soul shall live. Live in hope of the glory of God. Now you know what it is to live in dread of God, and you may, some of you who have been brought off from that dread by the goodness and mercy of God, know what it is to live in a serious uncertainty, but says the Lord Jesus "you shall live" There is no uncertainty there, "you shall live and that, not because the security of your life is in

your present experience, but because I am what I am, and because I live you shall live also." "Come to Me"

You shall live in the midst of storms and deaths. My friends, if your soul is led by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit into the Sanctuary of God, you will find there peace. Calm, in the midst of storms. In the middle of this disturbance which we have had in the nation, which looked exceeding ominous, and brought some to feel greatly shaken as to what might yet come, my mind was led I believe to God and that one word - "But Thou remainest" so fixed my heart and mind on God that the storm seemed as if it were not, though I felt and saw it. You will live in storms by faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing can really destroy that life though you may be tossed about. It will hold you.

Your soul shall live, even when your body dies. Says the Lord Jesus Christ to men who feared others - "Fear not him that killeth the body and hath no more that he can do. I say unto you - Fear Him that after He hath killed the body hath power to cast the soul into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear Him." and if that great God, who has that power is your God, and in Jesus Christ you know Him to be your Saviour and your friend, then you will live. You will live in hope and you will live in your soul when your body dies. Your soul shall live. It is a great thing not to have a dead soul. We all have a dead soul by nature, that is, our souls are dead to God, and often alas for us, through sin and guilt and sloth we forget God and live as if we were dead to Him. No exercise, no open ear to listen to what He will say, no submission, no confession, no prayer, truth having no effect upon us, judgment having no effect upon us, mercy having no effect upon us. This is like being dead, and the worldling who is not born again, never knows anything different, but the people of God know at times what it is to live before God in secret. The life of religion is not in public services, though God does communicate life in the service as it pleaseth Him, but the life of religion is a secret life between the soul and God and blessed is that man who, unknown to others it may be, lives a life of faith upon God in secret.

Your soul shall live, because I will give you the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of life in you, and will make you free from the law of sin and death, and give you liberty to live before Him, and this opens up that life which the child of God often would always be living here - a life of dependence, a life of prayer, a life of submission to God. No sweeter life than that of faith. No more irksome and troublesome life to the flesh, but you choose it, do you not? and the Lord will teach you in this way which you choose. Grace makes a man choose that life which mauls the flesh, the life of faith, and says the Lord Jesus - "You shall live, though deaths are about you and within you, though you are constantly meeting with deaths and constantly incurring death by death, yet as you come to Me and confess to Me and depend on Me, and look to Me and plead My blood and righteousness, you shall live." What a great thing it is to have some renewing of life, that is to experience what this word says - "Hear, and your soul shall live." For instance, when you are led to consider the blessed work of Christ, His atonement, you hear it, hear the report of it in your soul, the Spirit speaks to you about the blood of Christ when you are near despair. You hear it, and you are revived by it, and you are fleeing to that atonement. You flee to it by faith. You seek to be sheltered in that precious blood in your experience afresh, and you live. You have peace, you feel delivered, you feel the blessing of God, a sweet hope in your soul that you shall live eternally in the presence of God. Well, this is for poor sinners. It is an invitation issued by God for those who have nothing to bring. No money, no price, and He speaks faithfully, my friends. He will never invite you to Him and then spurn you. He will never call you to His footstool and give you anything less than the sweet mercy, and pardon and justification and at last heaven.

May He call us to Himself. May He enable us to cleave to Him. Give us an ear to incline to His words, whatever unbelief and the devil and our legal minds may say. Here is a trustworthy word "It is worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" says Paul of whom I am chief."