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Notes of a sermon by Mr. J. H. Gosden, preached at "Ebenezer" chapel, Richmond
on 12th. July, 1956

Text: Isaiah 61.7

"For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them."

Some promises in the Scriptures seem so rich and great they seem to take one's breath away even to contemplate, yet as exercised people in a condition of oppression and shame and fear and bondage, how attractive some of the promises are, especially when we are enabled to believe that He who made them is able to fulfil them, and when our condition is spoken to in the promises. If you observe, for the most part the promises of God in the Gospel carry with them the implication of distress, difficulty, shame, trouble, fear, helplessness and guilt. The promises meeting these cases not only are suitable to them but, as applied, will so meet the case as that people who find the promises simmering in their heart by the Spirit would turn the promise into prayer and this will create hope in one who is so down and depressed and abject and sensibly helpless. It is the helpless, the poor, the needy, the oppressed who want help and deliverance. Nor can our mourning and distress be meritorious to bring about the fulfilment of the promise. We are not to look upon our distress as if there is anything meritorious in it. There is no merit in anything we can suffer or do but the Lord does sometimes turn His people in their low estate to Himself as exalted with blessings in His hand, blessings that are promised in the Word of God.

This wonderful brief chapter expresses the richness of the Gospel and its blessings and its great effect in those to whom it is made known. Mention is made of the repairing of former desolations so that it may apply not only to persons individually but to a community. It applied to Jerusalem but it also applies to the church of God. She is in the wilderness in a low state today. Most of the friends of Christ are in a low state, under reproaches because of adversity, but the Lord is the same, unchangeably the same in His purpose, in His power, in His love, in His promises, in His covenant. That will be a strength to poor people who cry to Him for the fulfilment of such a word as the text, "For your shame ye shall have double".

What is our shame? It is our sin, sin is a reproach. You were singing about feeling sin and the distinction between that and just seeing it; and that will be a heavy reproach. To be under the reproach of sin, not among men but before God, to see it and feel it working within, to be oppressed by a body of sin and death, to be ashamed of our innumerable transgressions,- when a person has a right view of himself in the sight of God he will not only not expect on the ground

of merit any blessing, but will wonder why the Lord has borne with him. O the Lord's long suffering to some of us! Our unprofitable lives, our lack of spiritual fruit, our comparative ignorance of Himself and His truth, our poor, miserable profession, our unsavoury condition induced by our own carnality - these things will fill us with shame, procured by our sin against God. I need not enlarge here, some of you know what this shame is.

Another thing about this shame is that Satan seems to prevail with our unbelief. We are bound by his temptations and our unbelief and cannot get loose. Our weakness is our sin and Satan loves to distress poor, weak people who are distressed already with their own sins and we just need the Lord to relieve us of this shame, hide it from us, cleanse us from the sin that procures it. Underneath this shame there is a pining after the Lord. You cannot lie down satisfied with your shame, but look to the Lord and cry for deliverance. In this chapter it is said that the Lord will give to His people who mourn, "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness". He regards the mourning of His people, bottles their tears said David. The Lord has these blessings to give, ye shall have double in place of your shame.

What is this double the Lord has to give? As I view it in experience it is this which carries with it a doctrine, not a dry doctrine when experienced in the conscience. The first thing is a real sense of the application of the cleansing blood of Christ, the efficacy of the blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin. Now that truth that the blood of Christ can cleanse a soul when applied, cleanse the conscience, will beget in a guilty sinner full of shame, a longing and crying for that very thing. It is the Holy Spirit that inspires these cries and, inspires faith in the sin-atoning death of Christ. In all your shame do you feel a little relief in looking back to the cross of Christ? Did you ever feel as the hymnwriter said,

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

O what an important point this is in experience. You will never lift up your face unashamed until you get in your conscience the Spirit's witness of your interest in that precious blood that did for sin atone. O what a mercy it is to have a real faith in the death of Christ, to really have a gracious manifestation of that mystery of Calvary. It is a doctrine I know, but it is a truth and it is a fact, the fact of Calvary is an historical fact but the mystery of it is a blessed eternal truth, the efficacy of it will never be diminished, can never be lost. Now poor sinner in your shame, unable to hold up your head, you feel perhaps like the publican, smiting on his breast, standing afar off and would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven who cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner". The mercy that the publican wanted was this, this very thing. There is mercy with God that

He may be feared but that mercy flows from, and through, the death of Christ. How attractive, unspeakably attractive it is to a true believer. You feel your soul going out to the Lord Jesus with an intensity, inexpressible, as the Spirit conducts you back to Calvary. Your very soul will go out for the application of that, the reception into your soul of the benefit of this precious death, nor will this be without an influence on your heart and conscience to soften your spirit, although it is not yet a deliverance. You do not rejoice, you may feel a great relief and a sacred savour on your spirit from that precious work of Christ. Peter speaks of the blood of Christ as the precious blood of Christ and you will know a longing desire until the Lord gives you the application of it.

It says here, "In their land they shall possess the double"; the first thing in this double is the blotting out of sin, the removal of guilt, the sweet assurance sealed upon the heart, the testimony and witness of the Spirit that is indubitable. O this is a wonderful thing! If some of you got that tonight in your heart and conscience you would go home happy;

"Blessed are they whose guilt is gone,
Whose sins are washed away with blood"

He is a happy man and this awaits every mourning soul, mourning over his sins and after Christ; the Lord is ready to give it and will bestow it in His own good time. "For your shame ye shall have double"; divine remission, free and full remission of all sin. It applies to the whole person. We are sometimes apt to speak of things beyond our conception but it has been said that when the Lord forgives sin this forgiveness is so complete it relates to sin past, present and to come, but we need to be cautious when the Lord gives this; when a person possesses it certainly for the time affects his whole life, his whole person. You cannot find your sin then, though you remember your sins as to the guilt of them, they are gone, they are blotted out, this is a sweet experience, but a very solemn one. It not only brings comfort and removes reproach but it brings bitter sorrow for sin, a reverence for the Lord, a love to Him, a trust in Him, liberty to serve Him without fear or slavish dread. Who can speak of it?

"Forgiveness! 'tis a joyful sound
To malefactors doomed to die;
Lord, may this bliss in me be found;
May I redeeming grace enjoy"

It is an enjoyment; if you have ever had it you will know it is unspeakably sweet, unspeakably solemn, it makes the Lord Jesus so precious, His love, His dying love so sweet, makes sin so bitter, it sanctifies the soul, it is not the food the world gives. A lively hope of heaven makes trouble light, the Gospel is a sweet and powerful Gospel when applied, and application is the work of the Holy Ghost. A man may try to preach the Gospel but it is the Spirit alone can apply it to the heart of any hearer. Do you pray for the Holy Spirit to seal you to the day

of redemption, to shed abroad in your heart the love of God in Christ Jesus? You say, This is rather too great, too rich, too high for me. Let me ask you this, will less than this satisfy you? The very least hope in the mercy of God is invaluable if well founded, but what will satisfy a poor, oppressed sinner? What will satisfy that sinner, will be to be delivered from his guilt, to have the sweet experience of blood bought pardon in his heart and conscience. It makes life different; circumstances may remain the same but there is liberty, a lively hope, a warmth of love and tenderness of conscience.

That is one part of the double; the other I take to be the justification of the person. This is the imputation to a sinner and the putting on experimentally of Christ's righteousness. It is a doctrine again, all experimental language in the Gospel derives from doctrine; doctrine is teaching which comes from solid truth in the Scriptures and is conveyed to the soul by the Spirit. Justification is by the grace of God, it is free, it can never be merited, it is relative to an experience of condemnation and that is very solemn. O to be condemned, to be cast away, to feel the frown of God's condemnation in the conscience and to fear being eternally condemned, how solemn it is. God must, and He will, either condemn or justify our persons. Forgiveness and justification, though they are distinct, are inseparable. God will never condemn one whom He forgives but He will not only not condemn him He will justify him. To have condemnation removed, the cloud taken away from the conscience and a sense of divine remission, is wonderful, but to have a sense of interest in the righteousness of Christ is something more. Joshua got this double, first of all the Lord declared that his iniquity was taken away from him; that was one thing, and then a charge was given to clothe him with a change of raiment, that was justification, the putting on of Christ's righteousness. We must have it my friends, it is essential for salvation, without it we cannot find acceptance unto salvation. Blessed be God, Christ has wrought it out, He made atonement for sin when He died on Calvary's cross. He wrought out a righteousness in His life and obedience and He rose again from the dead for the justification of His unworthy people, and that righteousness will be imputed by God to a sinner in his experience, then he can lift up his face. This is with reference to that holy liberty, unashamed before God, having peace with God, being justified by God, pronounced just in the conscience by His Spirit. It seems sometimes too big, but it is promised and some of you in some measure know what it means and I hope it is not presumption in me to say I know what it means, to be not only forgiven, having sin blotted out but, as a distinct blessing, to have on the righteousness of Christ. The word in Romans 5 brought it into my heart, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ", and the doctrine of it is in Romans 3, it says there, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". We are not

worthy even to have all these things and I feel unworthy to utter them with my lips but they are real things. They are not fleeting notions and if you are satisfied without them you will be lost. If He deals with us in the law which we have broken He will condemn, His character demands it, but if He deals with us in Christ who obeyed every point in the law and suffered its complete penalty, if He deals with us in Christ He cannot do other than forgive and justify, His character demands it, His name and character are at stake. I say it with reverence the justice of God is in forgiveness and the justice and the grace of God are in justification, that God should be just and be manifest as just in the justifying of the ungodly that believe in Jesus Christ. This is too deep, too rich for anything but a God-given faith, but if you are brought to believe in the Person of Christ you will believe that this is not too big a blessing for the Lord to give if He gave His only begotten Son to be a sacrifice, delivered Him up to suffer, bleed and die, if He put Him to grief who is His own divine Son Incarnate. Those who are taught by His Spirit their need are brought to repentance.

"For your shame ye shall have double and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double". This confusion is in the guilt and fear and temptation and unbelief and ignorance. You may feel so bewildered sometimes you hardly know where you are and what you are. The devil confuses you with his clamour, unbelief confuses you with its noise, circumstances do, unanswered prayer will confuse you and you say,

"Strange myself and paths appear"

but when you get this light shining, the Sun of Righteousness, a cloudless sky in your conscience, when you have the sweet unction of Christ's redemption and feel you have peace with God through Jesus Christ then peace flows in. Everything is in its right place. The devil first being cast out, your thoughts are established, and you are at the footstool of mercy for confession, "they shall rejoice in their portion." I remember distinctly the great rejoicing that I felt in Christ; I was in a railway carriage alone, how precious He was to me, filled my whole soul and presented a prospect for eternity. My only care then was lest I should live to sin against Him. Rejoice not in self, not in any temporal thing but in your portion.

What is your portion? Jeremiah said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him". (Lam.3.24) David said, "Thou art my refuge and my portion." (Ps.142.5) What a Portion it is, everything you want here below is inside this; for the world belongs to the church, belongs to a believer because it belongs to Christ. All our circumstances move us very much, frequently more than they ought to move us as professed believers, through the weakness of our faith. Sin weakens our faith, unbelief is always strong but a sight of Christ and an interest in His blood and righteousness will strengthen you. You will rejoice in your portion, you have all God's power, all God's wisdom, all His immutability in His promises, all the precious riches of His Word, His undying love; everything

that the Lord is in this portion. A drop of it is wonderful but it is illimitable, "they shall rejoice in their portion". David said in one place, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage". Sometimes the Lord's people get the double in this sense, they get the nether springs and the upper springs, they get providential goodness and spiritual goodness. The Lord tempers His dealings with His people but does give sometimes a smiling providence, as well as grace in the heart but for the most part the Lord's people find that there is much conflict either with sin or with circumstances. But their portion, being Christ, cannot be lost. We have lost everything by sin, forfeited every claim on God and can only claim the curse and death on the ground of any merit we have, but if Christ is our portion then heaven is our home. "They shall rejoice in their portion". The covenant is their portion, that covenant that was made in eternity for the church of God becomes a person's portion and this will cover a great deal. I have thought much lately about David. David had many disappointments, domestic trials and unfaithful friends; Ahithophel and Absalom were great trials to him and others. He suffered much shame and reproach; the Lord brought trouble to him because of his sin; many things came into his family and into the kingdom but when he got to the end this was his declaration, "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." (2 Samuel 23.5) I have looked at that and anticipated life's last hour and have thought and hoped that that might be my experience, the covenant, the mediator of the covenant, the blessings of God, eternal life and eternal glory, everlasting sanctification and an everlasting song.

"For they shall rejoice in their portion". When you can rejoice down here it may only last a short time but the cause of rejoicing remains; the source of it is the 'ocean-fulness' of God's grace and love in Christ Jesus. That is a great favour to know if you lose the comfort and are shaken, it may be, as to the reality of the blessing. If through sin you become again weakened and your unbelief is strong through Satan's temptations, the Lord is the same and all you need is a fresh touch; that would do it, it would confirm the past and it will give you a fresh testimony that He is your portion,

"Unchangeable His will;
Whatever be my frame."

and you will not be light hearted about it, trouble will be trouble, but there is a solid enjoyment in this.

"For your shame ye shall have double". This might be accommodated to include an increase in the church. You may feel sometimes the reproach of the leanness, the desolations that are in Zion. We were singing about it just now (285) and

the Psalmist spoke of it in Psalm 74 "We see not our signs;" he goes on to put his case before the Lord and then at the end, "O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise Thy name." Why will that be? In respect to the church when the Lord turns her captivity, when He gathers in His other sheep, when He adds to the church, as in apostolic days, those whom He will save eternally. Any indication of the Lord's favour, any manifestation of the work of His grace, any fulfilment of covenant blessings manifestly in the church will be, must be, a matter of true spiritual rejoicing in the hearts of the Lord's people. Their own case is that which is the most important. Ministers have their own cases, they cannot preach as if they have no case of their own; it would be easy for a man of average intelligence to preach out of any text in the Bible without any case but it would be dead preaching. A minister has his own case but he has the cases of the people too as an accountability to God and this is a reproach sometimes because of the lack of signs following. It is pleasant to see poor sinners brought under the power of the truth unto repentance and godly fear and manifesting the work of grace in the fear of God, in faith toward the Lord Jesus and love to Him and His people, and especially when the Lord gathers some in blessing their souls to testify of what He has done for them, then there is a rejoicing together, then it will be good as well as pleasant, as the Psalmist says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

That makes another thing come to my mind, there is a time of reproach resting even today upon the Lord's people because of a lack of spiritual communion that there will be when there is a healthy state in the church. What can bring back that love? Why the shining of the Lord's righteousness, "I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." (Jer.33.6) Now these things may seem to some of you to be so distant as to be almost impossible, but as the Lord said by Zechariah when promising a time of spiritual prosperity, "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts." (Zech.8.6) Cannot the Lord fulfil His promise, can you find in your heart, can I find in my heart to ply the throne of grace with diligence, to give the Lord no rest until He pours down the blessing? You know what the Lord said when speaking by Malachi "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal.3.10) Perhaps not more than once or twice in a life-time do the Lord's people find an overflowing blessing, but there is no reason in God why we should not seek it according to that word now quoted. David said, "My cup runneth over", and what a difference it would make to some of us, some almost empty at times, tried, unsavoury, dark, confused, full of shame and reproach, if the Lord should pour

unsavoury, dark, confused, full of shame and reproach, if the Lord should pour out into our empty vessels of His hid treasure and fill us to overflowing. What would it do? It would not elate us, we should not be excited with carnal excitement, there be a rejoicing in our portion with sobriety, but the overflowing of our hearts would be in praise for His great mercy and goodness, and there would be a flowing together if a number of the people of God had that blessing and that is a promise based upon the atonement, "Therefore", "because Christ has died", "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord." (Jer.31.12) Flowing together expresses sweet harmony and to whom is the song? Why, it is to the Lord alone, that everlasting song which begins here in the heart in secret and, occasionally, is known in public worship. It is from the knowledge of Christ in His redemption, in His righteousness, in His love, in the covenant, and there is rejoicing. True religion has two sides to it. There is a mournful side, and a rejoicing side. All the mourning will be in this life. This is promised in chapter 60, "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended". As you get the blessing praise Him and bless Him while you are enabled to. You may have many days of darkness; nothing can dispel it but the Lord's countenance. "Everlasting joy shall be unto them", no end to it,

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head"

What was it? It was to be arrayed in the garments of heaven in the robe of righteousness and washed in the blood of Christ. Here is our hope, it is a good hope through Jesus Christ and based upon the promises. If you are in a condition to need the fulfilment of the promises may the Lord help you to plead them. May He, through hope in His mercy and a gracious constancy in waiting upon Him, save us from being unduly distressed. It will come to some of you I feel sure not only to believe that Christ died and rose again, but that He died to take away your sins and rose again for your justification and that He is your Redeemer in heaven, your Fore-runner there. There is a good hope in the Gospel which will support you through many troubles, support you in heavy trials, and at the end the shouting will be "Grace, grace unto it". O to be a living stone in the heavenly building, to be a unit in that numberless company whom Christ will lead to the Father, and say "Here am I and the children that Thou hast given Me". What an unspeakable honour it will be. O you say, May I live to reach that place! Is that your desire for if it is your desire and your hope I tell you one thing you will not be rushing about to endeavour to ensure as much of this world as you can; nothing will sanctify and separate as a lively hope of seeing the King in His beauty, and being with Him and like Him for ever. I must leave the subject. This chapter is full of encouragement to those who are really needy and unworthy; blessings in the Gospel can never be merited, never be deserved but they can be had and had freely. May we believe it, may we know it and be enabled to join in that everlasting song. Amen