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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 18 May 1924

JOHN 10 v 27/28/29/30

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One"

I would this evening, by the Lord's help, direct your attention a little to this gift that Christ here declares He makes to His sheep. "I give unto them eternal life". Man has in possession an immortal soul. When God breathed into him the breath of life he became a living soul, and though when he sinned that life was corrupted, and the worst kind of death he became subject to, he did not become thereby in his soul, mortal. We must live for ever; our souls shall live in an eternal consciousness and our bodies shall be raised one day after death and be united to our souls and our persons must then live, shall then live, either under the awful, intolerable - yet must be tolerated curse of God or live in His presence. The life which the Son of God came to bring, and which He gives to His sheep, is immortal glory; it is everlasting happiness, eternal felicity; it is everlasting justification by God. It is beyond all that the mind of man can conceive. Therefore it becomes an exceedingly keen matter - may it be so with all here - to a living soul as to whether he possesses this life or no. There are only two ways of spending eternity - no medium between hell and heaven - the company of God and in His love, or the company of fallen angels, devils, and lost men in enmity and curse. And it is Christ, the Speaker of the text, the Shepherd of Israel, the Son of God, the Redeemer of sinners, it is this Person who possesses and who gives this life. It is an unloseable life, it is eternal, not ending. The beginning of it though is often very feeble as to the apprehension of the subject of it, and it often seems to be ebbing out in the subject of it. But it is an

unloseable and eternal life, and it shall issue in immortal glory. And first the gift of this to the sheep is the gift of faith, for it is by faith men live in this world. There is no life of sense strictly speaking to a child of God here, though he may have with his faith a sense of comfort at times, a sense of peace, a sense sometimes even of joy, but the life here is really that of faith. The Apostle Paul, that great saint of God, said of himself that the life he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God. And this life which is by faith is necessarily a life of dependence. Spiritual faith is a wonderful grace; it is a principle that never can die, and it lives upon an unseen, an intangible object. That is a great word of the Apostle's to the Colossians where he said - "Your life is hid with Christ in God" and this is it that makes the life of a poor sheep of Christ, to himself, so difficult. Naturally we understand by sense. We hear audibly, we see by the eye of sense, we feel by the touch, we have natural appetites. Spiritually we have the only true vehicle of life, faith. Faith is that principle in the heart by which a person has union in his experience to the source of his life in heaven. It is a life of union; the union is unbreakable, everlasting; so strong, as that, though heaven and earth shall pass away and every other union, earthly union, be broken, this can never be. But how feeble is that faith oftentimes in the heart of a sheep, by which he lives upon the Lord Jesus. It is a gift. "By grace" says the Apostle "are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God". Has that gift been given to us? Do we live by faith upon an unseen life, an unseen Head, an unseen Redeemer; unseen, but not altogether unknown, for faith, the life which the Lord Jesus gives to His people, receives nourishment from Himself as He condescends to make Himself known. In an earlier chapter in this gospel you find the Lord Jesus declaring Himself to be the bread of life, and one sure evidence of possessing eternal life is an appetite for Jesus Christ, a desire for His presence, a hungering and thirsting for His righteousness, a seeking after Him. O, it is a great matter to have a spiritual desire, a spiritual hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ. It proves something; it proves that the soul is alive to God, for who is Christ? He is the Son of God. Yes, but He is the Son of Man. Ah, said He of Himself, I give My body; this My

body which you see, this body shall be broken for you. This life that I have I lay down for you. And, ordaining in the church a symbol of His death, He said of the bread "Take eat, this is My body which is broken for you". It is a great thing to know enough of the Lord Jesus in the necessity of His atoning death, to know enough of Him in some apprehension of His suitability and of His power to save, to want to know more of Him. It is a life of dependence. Union, the kind of union that truly subsists between the election of grace and their Head, the Son of God, makes it necessary that all the election of grace, each individual, shall depend upon the Head. The security of the Church in Christ does not take away that dependence, but it really is the foundation of it. Hence it is that a sinner sometimes may feel as weak as he can possibly be weak, and almost overcome by a sense of the power of the body of sin and death in and upon him the law of sin that brings him death in his feelings and in his soul as to the exercise of grace - and yet the next moment he may, by the power of faith wrought in him by the Holy Ghost, feel so strong as to be satisfied that one day he will enter into God's presence unashamed; he will enter into immortal glory.

It is a life of hope. The Apostle in writing to Titus speaks of the hope of eternal life twice and it is worthy speaking of, thinking of, meditating upon. We know a good deal of death in this life, but eternal life knows no death; Christ knows no death, but the remembrance of Calvary, His death there. He is an immortal Person. He died unto sin once, now He liveth unto God and His people live in hope of eternal life through Him. It is a free gift. It is given according to God's own predestination, sovereignly, and according to man it is given, apparently, to the worst. The sheep of Christ are gathered from all nations. They are among the worst characters in their own apprehension from time to time. They are brought to feel, if not to say, they are the chief of sinners, but Christ searches them out to give them this life, searches them out by His blessed Spirit. I will search and seek out Mine own sheep. I will allure them and bring them into the wilderness. I will bring them under the rod and into the bond of the covenant. And all this is free and sovereign and uncaused, except caused by the

love and will of God. "I give unto them eternal life". It is a life of conflict and evidently in this verse the Lord speaks this word in order to encourage His poor sheep in their difficulties. "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

How oft have sin and Satan strove
To rend My soul from Thee my God

We have to say it in our hearts sadly oftentimes. We often have to say that we do fear lest our hope and our life and our way have perished from the Lord. There is a conflict. A thief cometh to steal and to kill and to destroy, and he comes to steal that which does not belong to him. He comes to steal the sheep from the fold; he comes to kill the life of faith in the heart, to destroy the grace that is given and this means an experience in the person, the sheep; so that the Lord Jesus in this word declares, as He alone can, by His authority, His knowledge - "they shall never perish". They fear they shall, they often feel to be perishing, but they shall never because they are Mine, and because I am their Head; because I give them life and that life is in Myself. I think it would be difficult for any person - and especially it is difficult for me - to express the blessedness of union to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was expressed early in the Scriptures; it was expressed in Eden. In the chapter we read this morning you find it expressed in type where the Lord brought the woman to Adam and he spoke of the union between them - bone of his bone and so forth - and the Apostle Paul referring to that says that is a pattern of the union that is between the Church and her Head, her Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the security. O, if you have any evidence of having union to Christ. An evidence will be this that you need Him, that you cannot do without Him, that His blood is that alone which you hope in, and would fain shelter under for satisfaction of justice, for the end of the law to you, for your acceptance with God. If you can do without Christ, if you can do without His atonement, if you can do without His voice in your heart, without the visits of His love, if you can be satisfied always with His silence and His absence, then there is solemn evidence that, at present, there is no life in you. Christ spoke a solemn

word to some when He said "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life". Why, some of you may think that you have been coming for years for this life and feel more death than life; feel now seriously to wonder if you ever have known anything savingly. But if you give up coming, are you satisfied by fearing you are wrong, or does your heart cry out for God? Do you sometimes go mourning after Him? Well, says the Lord - "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted". Mourning for Christ is a part of life. It is also a life more or less of service. The people of God are quickened, are called out from the world, have their consciences purged from sin for a purpose, to be servants of God, to be His witnesses, His servants. It is written in the Revelation concerning heaven, a great word - "His servants shall serve Him". And there is a life, even in this life, in this poor, mortal life, there is a life of service, a profession of Christ's Name taken upon one, humbly put upon one by the constraint of divine love, of redeeming love. This is a part of life. It brings a person into exposure and observance. It makes him sometimes, in this, his life, say - Lead me O lord in a plain path because of those who observe me. Yet it is a blessed life to be led, to be caused, to be constrained, to follow Christ's commandment, having heard His voice - "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof". It is one of the highest honours that a person can have, if not the highest in this life, to be permitted to rank himself rightly with the people of God, with Christ's followers. But O, it is a difficult thing, and all through this there is dependence. Our profession is dependent upon the Head, as our inward life of prayer and of faith and of hope, our life of conflict; all these parts of life, this eternal life, are dependent upon the Head. Never expect to be able to go on without Christ. Never expect to hold yourself up in His ways.

Now it is strange that those who know these truths in their judgement and really in some degree in the hearts at times are greatly dismayed when they come to find their dependence, their need of one to depend upon. Unbelief makes a person unwilling to be weak; unbelief of the Lord Jesus and His merit; unbelief of His atonement; unbelief of His faithfulness, of His intercession, makes a person fearful of trusting Him. It is a

sad thing when this is powerful in the heart; this body of sin and death, this law of sin that turns a man away from the life of dependence. O, this life is one of conflict. "When I would do good" - that is when I would trust alone in the merits of Christ, in His all-supporting arm, in His faithful word, in His blessed promise, in what He has done for me, in what I hope He has done in me, and what He has yet promised to do - the evil of unbelief is present with me. But there is a power outside that is the source of this life which brings a person again to dependence and I believe that this word, this very word of the text is, as the Spirit of Christ may bring it to us, calculated to bring us to depend, rightly to depend on the Lord Jesus. "They shall never perish". Why, how many times I have felt to be perishing in my hope, in my profession, in all the verdure of my religion. How often I have felt to be sinking under doubts, and under guilt, but as often I have been brought back here to the fountain, the source of life itself, the Lord Jesus.

They shall never perish for lack of my care. We cannot take care of ourselves if we are sheep. He who thinks that he knows all that is to be known and therefore can manage pretty well in religion, is the man who gives sad evidence, if not of death, entire death, gives sad evidence of a sleepy, unhealthy state of soul. The Lord Jesus does not say all that He has to say to His people at once. If you have heard His voice, may the Lord help you to hold fast to what He has said and to bless Him. As He may, by His Spirit, bring to your remembrance what He has said, may He help you to bless Him for it. But we need Him to speak again and so to give us the bread of life. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life". The word "man" here you will notice is introduced, and does not appear in the original. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand". This word "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand" includes every kind of power, not merely the power of men, but all principalities all powers, all troubles inward, all sins, all devils. "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand". How do people know they are in the hand of Christ? There are various ways of knowing it. First when the Lord declares it to them - I will hold thy hand and keep thee. You will feel the comfort of it and the strength of it, the security of it, if and when the

Lord speaks some such word into your heart. It will give you power to commit yourself into His hand then. When the Lord claims a person, takes hold of Him, then that person commits himself to Him as the Psalmist - "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me O Lord God of truth" And very sweet it is when this is the experience. It means rest, and there is rest in this life, though often there is conflict. It is the foretaste of that life that is hoped for, that eternal rest that remaineth to the people of God. Rest from unbelief, from tormenting fear; rest from the tempter's power, rest from sin's power, rest from legal strife, from attempting to do what God knows we never can do. There is a rest in it and there are times when we know that we are in the Lord's hand because He does not permit our enemies to reign over us; because He has not shut us up in the hand of the enemy. Who could hold us up, who could hold back our enemies, who could give us from time to time victory over them, but the Lord Jesus, and His mighty hand? This is expressive of the power of Christ. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand". How did He possess them? "My Father which gave them Me is greater than all". They were God's, they were the Father's by His electing of them, by His choice of them. Did you ever deliberately consider this matter? Election, divine choice, sovereign choice; it is a tremendous doctrine. It is a foundation, the foundation of salvation. "My Father which gave them Me is greater than all". The Lord Jesus in His prayer to His Father before He left the world said, of His people whom He then committed to His Father for their keeping - "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me and they have kept Thy Word". Now this Word of Christ's concerning His Father relates to His mediation, His service in the matter of gathering, of keeping His people, as He says lower down in the chapter - "I and My Father are One", and as through the Scriptures you find it declared that the Son and the Father and the Holy Ghost are equal, yet there is one respect in which it is true as Christ here declares, the Father is greater than Himself. "My Father is greater than I"; that is, I am His servant in the matter of this life, in the matter of salvation. So He carries the minds, the hearts of His poor, fearful sheep, through Himself as it were, and His power, and His will, and His gift of eternal life, to the very source of that life in the Father, in the Father's electing choice. "And no man

is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" O, to be in the hand of election, to be in the eternal mind of God, in the heart of God from eternity. To be thought of when the Church was thought of; to be thought of when the Covenant of Grace was entered into, when settlements of immortal glory were made upon a company of men, a number that no man can number; I say to be thus in the hand of God the Father. "My Father which gave them Me is greater than all." And He possesses them because they were given to Him. He possesses them also because they, being given to Him, He has purchased them for Himself. "My sheep hear My voice" "My sheep". They are My purchase. Ye are a purchased people says Peter of the election of grace, purchased by Christ. Sold under sin, they were redeemed by His blood. "And no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand". Here is a kind of double strength, a two-fold cord; the Father's power and the Mediator's power; the Redeemer's power and God the Father's power together to secure from perishing the Church of God, a poor, dependent believer. O, to think that God should take such care, such trouble with His poor people, with poor sinners who desired not the knowledge of Himself or His ways. That He should take such trouble with them as so to secure them and so securing them to bless them with this life, the life of the Holy Ghost, for it is the life given to them which is brought by the Holy Spirit. He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to every sheep. He brings the life; He it is who is the Spirit of life in Christ that makes a dead sinner live. And it is this life, this eternal life, which poor sinners live, redeemed, that makes them so frequently want Christ in particular things. Said He to those who were about Him - "Labour not for the bread which perisheth, but for the bread that endureth unto everlasting life". Now this bread must be daily partaken of, constantly had. The source of it is in heaven, but we must have some bread for our souls.

Now take this, the life itself is justification before God, as the death is condemnation by Him for sin, and therefore a person who has this life, and who, from time to time, realises that he deserves condemnation because of his guilt, needs, and is led by faith to, the Lord Jesus for this justification which is in Him. I am thankful that it is declared in the Scripture that

the Lord Jesus when He died and brought life and immortality to light, that He opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness. We can have no life of communion with God without the fountain. No access to Him without the cleansing virtue of Christ's blood, and this is bread; this is the communion of Christ. "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ". My dear friends, I believe that all our true health of soul and proper peace of conscience and life of communion with God comes from some distinct, more or less distinct apprehension and application of the atonement of Christ, whereby, through which, a sinner is justified by God. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Christ gives this life. He gives it, as to the experience of communion with God, by His intercession. O, the intercession of Christ is a solid communication of life to the soul. If the Lord ever gives you to realise the value and the virtue of His intercession in heaven, it will most infallibly make you live towards God. It will enable you to go in your worst case to God, and life is going to God, following Christ, who said - "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name I will do it". And then, having declared these blessed truths, He comes to a kind of climax, an explanation, a blessed word - "I and My Father are One". He had already said that His Father was greater than all; He had already said "My Father is greater than I". Now He declares this great foundation truth - "I and My Father are One". And if the Holy Spirit should show us the connection between this short verse, the thirtieth, and the previous gracious declarations of Christ, I believe it would be a strength to us.

Let us notice then, for a moment or two, what Christ here declares. I, Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep, the Redeemer of sinners, the Friend of sinners, the Saviour of the lost, I, Jesus of Nazareth, the Man Christ Jesus, "I and My Father are One". This refers to, first of all to the essential Deity of the Father and the Son. They are One in essence, God. And I believe that were the Holy Ghost to give us seriously, solemnly, truly to believe this, we should perceive a glory, a power, a blessedness, a solemnity in His Words, Christ's Words, beyond all that ever we could perceive apart from this great doctrine - "I and My Father are One"; eternally one; in

eternity. "He that hath the Son hath the Father also". "He that denieth the Son denieth the Father also". My dear friends, if you are ever brought to know the comfort, in any degree, of the Sonship of the Lord Jesus and the Fatherhood of the Father in the eternal Trinity it will indeed be for your blessing. It will be beyond all that you can express. It is this that brings out all the grace of God. It is this which makes a person see how the love of God was expressed in its highest expression in the gift of His Son. It is this that gives to a person to realise that there is an infinite sufficiency in Christ's work on earth as a Substitute. "I and My Father are One". They are one also in their will. There are not three wills in the Trinity; the Father willing to curse the Church, the Saviour desiring to save them. No! No! They are One in will. The will of God the Father was in His choice of them and the will of God the Son was in receiving and in redeeming them. They all, each Person in the Trinity, One God, have one will. The Covenant of Grace was harmonious. It was a true Covenant, a perfect Covenant, and in that Covenant the will of Jehovah was for the good of the poor people of God that should be made His people by the grace of God. And if this is made out it will be very comforting to you. You may sometimes feel a little that you can believe in the love, in the goodwill, in the mercy, in the compassion of Christ, but will the Father, will God receive you? Can He look upon you? Is there not anger there? If you are brought to realise that though Christ is the Mediator, though He is the Man Christ Jesus, He also is true Almighty God, and that the Father's will, goodwill, is equal to, and the same as, the Son's goodwill in His redemption, this will attract you. This blessed unison and harmony of will is brought out in Christ's Own word, where He says "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you" They are One in love and what love it is, what a cord, a three-fold cord is the love of the Trinity. Christ says "As the Father loveth Me even so have I loved you", and He says of the Father, "The Father Himself loveth you". And the Spirit, He loves His people, He bears with them, He quickens them. He takes of Christ's things in His love and reveals them to them. "I and My Father are One in our love, and "I and My Father are One" in purpose. What purposes of grace are in God. What has He purposed? Why this, that the people of God shall be

terrible fear of the prevalence of, the dominion of, sin, under this gracious influence, under this divine power of the life of grace. "Grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life", and all comes through this blessed Shepherd who is Almighty God. May the Lord grant to us to know Him, to hear His voice, to follow and to trust in Him, and then the issue will be that we shall be brought to know Him as He is. "Then shall I show you plainly of the Father", that is in eternity, in immortal glory, which this eternal life shall issue in.

AMEN.