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Prayer Meeting Address

by Mr J H Gosden

at Galeed Chapel Brighton on
Friday Evening 23 March 1923

John 6

All true godliness, all vital religion, is based upon and comes from the Person of the Son of God. Without Him and without a knowledge of Him in our individual experiences we can have no godliness, and this solemn chapter discovers to us the tremendous difference there is between a natural knowledge of Christ and a spiritual knowledge of Him as the Son of the living God, and if the Holy Spirit should show us the difference between these two kinds of knowledge it will make us anxious and earnest in our desires to have that knowledge of Him which is saving. The discourse in the chapter arose from the miracle which Jesus had performed in feeding with a few loaves and fishes a great multitude of people, and from that multitude many followed Him, having been fed by Him. Thereby, perceiving Him to be someone extraordinary they followed Him, and He proceeded to teach them who He was, and they asked a sign of Him, saying that their fathers had given to them a sign from heaven, manna to eat in the wilderness, and who was He who claimed to be from Him. What sign had He to show? And then He taught them who He was, that it was His Father who gave that true bread from heaven. Then, willing to live for ever, they asked for that bread to be given to them. "Lord evermore give us this bread". All men, with any semblance of seriousness in them, want to live for ever, are willing to go to heaven. But see what followed. As the Lord opened to them the spirituality, the divinity of His Person, and of His work, they began to reason with themselves; they could not accept His teaching, and they began to murmur amongst themselves. How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? Then the Lord Jesus told them plainly that except they did eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, they had no life in them, and they said then "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" and they were offended. And the Lord then told them of a greater mystery than this. Doth this offend you that I have told you of the things that belong to faith here? What and if ye shall see the Son

of Man ascend up where He was before? Christ crucified is a stumbling block and foolishness to natural reasonings, and Christ raised from the dead is a greater mystery to nature. So says He, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" correcting their carnal notions of eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of Man. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life" But there are some of you that believe not; you read the words, you hear My words, you read Moses' writings, but you receive not what I say. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray Him. And He said therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto Me except it were given to Him of My Father. They had come to Him literally; they were following Him ostensibly as disciples but they had never come to Him in that spiritual life and desire as to the Son of God the Saviour of the world. Only such come, and this may be a solemn reflection with us who profess Christ's Name, whether we have only come to Him in a common way. It shows us how that a person who speaks of faith, and lives by faith as he would say, upon God, in regard of providences and so forth yet who never comes to Him for salvation is short, and who, having insisted upon this, that it was a divine power, a power of His Father that drew men to Himself, and that those who do come to Him literally and physically, do not come to Him in that sense, this so offended them, they were too ignorant of Him and of themselves, that from that time it is said, many of His disciples who professed so to be, went back and walked no more with Him. What a solemn test this was, Reason, natural fallen reason, must be by God outdone in us by a revelation of Himself before we have any proper basis of faith for the exercise of it. And in these words of Christ's we see clearly the necessity of a divine manifestation of the Son of God to our souls. Without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, God's Own Son incarnate, Christ crucified, the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, we can have no true religion, and shall have no footing for our faith when storms and troubles come to us. No feelings, no melting of heart, no hopes of heaven, no exercise of grace, none of these things, no past experience will stand when the storm comes. Only this Rock of Ages as it is laid in our souls by a divine revelation of Him. And this shows to us the

supernatural nature of faith; how that reason cannot aspire to it. The mind of man cannot grasp the mystery of godliness, yet the simplest soul does lay hold upon it by the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, and it is this blessed Spirit, the Spirit of God's Son who teaches the Church from the least to the greatest and by whose indwelling and teaching the whole Church is united into one body and baptised into one Person and this is the secret of the weakling standing when temptation and trouble come. By the Holy Ghost he is taught his ruin and by the same blessed Spirit he is taught the blessed Person, the mighty, the holy, the glorious, the immortal Person of Emanuel, God with us, the crucified Redeemer, the great High Priest and this stands. You may feel as weak as water and by God's dealings with you it may be as if with a mighty power in your soul He is saying "Will ye also go away?" But the Spirit's teaching in you will certainly so work as to cause you to answer in your heart and in your practice before God "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" Eternal life through the death of Christ is, as it were, the keynote of the desire of every child of God, and what a mighty work this is wrought by the Holy Spirit. How is it some of you here and myself with you stand from week to week and are not flooded and driven away as we have feared so many times by temptations and by our own corruptions, the uprisings of sin within, and the sights we have of what we are, and the things we meet with in the world. Why if I may answer for myself and for you, it is because Christ is what He is, and is what He is to us, the Son of God incarnate, who gave Himself for the Church, and as some of us hope, and it is our only hope of heaven, gave Himself for us, and "Here we fix and comfort take, Jesus died for sinners' sake". " And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ the Son of the living God". It is not perhaps always a man can say that he really feelingly, comfortably and strongly believes in this Person. Sometimes he says in his heart, " O that I knew where I might find Him". He believes in Him then, but it is not comfortable believing, for the soul is weak and if he cannot find his rock and refuge, then his weakness is painful to him. But this blessed, this eternal Person, the Son of God remains, and this is the standing of every child of God, the weakest and the strongest. Peter must say this, and every child of God must say this, "To whom shall we go?" The Church is

united in weakness; it is united in the sense of sin; it is united in an experience, solemnly realised experience, of the need, the essential need, of the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of their souls. His blood alone can cleanse their souls, each one says for himself. Only that gives them any hope of getting well through. They overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. There is something to overcome but nothing can overcome this Person, and nothing will overcome you if He is revealed to you, if, by faith, you apprehend His Person. Perhaps you say in your hearts, I ought to dwell more upon a sense of interest in Him. Well, that respects comfort, that respects joy and satisfaction. It is not greater than a knowledge of the Person of Christ, for His Person is the greatest of all, and a knowledge of His Person is the greatest knowledge you can have, and certainly if He is manifested to you the manifestation will so fill you, will make you so come out of yourself to Him, as that for the time it will be as there is nothing but Christ. You see nothing but Him; no temptations, no troubles, no sins, for they are swallowed up in Christ. The sweet experience of His testimony in your heart is love, and the word of His grace filling you with satisfaction that you are His child, this will come afterwards. It is a great thing to be able at any time in your very soul deliberately to say to the Lord, "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ the Son of the living God", and if you cannot say that, if you feel that your faith is so weak and your mind so dark and you are so small cannot you come in with Peter here? "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" There are degrees of faith, but only one Object of faith, and only one life of faith in the Church. "Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh" And there is our hope, and there is our glory; there is our rest and our satisfaction. With Him we would be, towards Him we would look, upon Him would we lean, and live, and for Him we would live. This is living and it is only by the power of the Spirit of Christ. You will remember that the Apostle Paul in writing of the union in the church and the differences of the members of the church in the body, how that some were greater than others in some particular gifts, yet he said, there is one Spirit and no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. May the Lord save us from being offended with these

mysteries, this blessed, this substantial, this holy religion because it is beyond our reason. Faith believes what reason cannot understand and rejoices in the Person that she believes. May the Lord grant it to us.

AMEN.