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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Blunsdon Hill on 4 May 1955

Psalm 111 verses 2 and 3

The works of the Lord are great, sought out of
all them that have pleasure therein. His work is
honourable and glorious, and His righteousness
endureth for ever

Brief mention was made this afternoon of the wonderful works
of creation and the work of providence, both honourable and
glorious; and also a little was said concerning the work of
redemption, that great work, that super-excellent work of God in
redeeming poor sinners from death and hell. It was an honourable
and glorious work that Christ came upon, as the Servant of the
Father; for sheer Omnipotence could never have completed that
work. God is omnipotent, and all things are possible to Him,
except one thing: that is, "He cannot deny Himself"; He cannot
do an unjust act. Therefore He sent His beloved Son into this
world as His righteous Servant in that covenant of which He was
the appointed Mediator, to serve in things pertaining to God in
the interests of poor sinners. This was the work of redemption.
It involved the incarnation of God's eternal Son. He, the Man
Christ Jesus, wrought out a righteousness, laboured through life,
honoured the law, and suffered its penalty in His substitutionary
death to atone for sin. He accomplished that work, and
immediately before being betrayed and crucified, He said to His
divine Father: "The hour is come I have glorified Thee on
the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do
. . . . and now come I to Thee." O blessed Redeemer! His
intercession in that chapter, John 17, has been nourishment, and a
strength and comfort to many a child of God.

Then He went to the cross, went to Gethsemane, and in that
garden before any man touched Him, He was very sorrowful unto
death; "and being in an agony He prayed more earnestly", and He
said: "O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me;
nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done." I have thought

sometimes I have caught just a little glimpse of what that meant; we could not bear much - "O My Father!" The eternal Son of the eternal Father, there He was in the form of a Servant, in the habit of a Man, making Himself of no reputation and being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Thrice He prayed and fell to the ground, and from His sacred human body there dropped, sweat, as it were great drops of blood. And what was this? An honourable work, the work of redemption, the obtaining of eternal redemption for poor, lost, wretched sinners. Some of us here contributed to the penal wrath that was in that cup when He said: "If this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." He was a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God". He fully discharged His obligations; and one obligation was to make atonement, to pay the price set, to lay down His precious life. And He drank that cup. What the drinking of it was, we shall never adequately know. It is beyond our conception. You may sometimes feel, as I have felt, to have deserved a thousand hells; but Christ drank up all the hells of all His people in that cup. One of the hymnwriters says:

How huge the heavy load of all
Since only mine's so great!

Here was the glory of divine love, its unquenchableness: "Many waters cannot quench love." Its freeness, it can never be bought or merited: "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned". But what does He say? "I will love them freely". Free love, unquenchable love, suffering love! Is there not therein a glory? "His work is honourable". He rather chose to die than fail to discharge His obligations, fail to redeem His people. Love was the motive that moved Him. Faithfulness was another motive, and He went through with it, accomplished the work His Father sent Him to do. And there He is now, an all-prevailing Intercessor at the right hand of God.

But I must leave that part, though I know I have spoken very inadequately concerning it, and speak of another work of God

a lost sinner, makes him feel to need a refuge from the wrath of God, makes him have new feelings and thoughts about himself, about time and death and eternity, brings into the conscience conviction of his sin, makes him know God's omniscience and that His omniscient eye is upon him, and that the law claims him - this is a work "honourable". Although it brings trouble to a sinner and great distress oftentimes, it is honourable because God has a purpose of mercy toward such people. He saves them out of the thralldom and death of sin and Satan, and brings them into the solemn light. "Ye must be born again", said Christ to Nicodemus. None can see the kingdom of God unless born again. We may have a quantity of religion, we may have certain correct theoretical notions about the Lord Jesus, and yet not be born again. That is a very great exercise to some people, especially those who have been brought under the external sound of the gospel. But it is a work of the Holy Ghost, a mysterious, vital, sovereign, imperishable, irreversible work. Christ Himself spoke of it. He said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

One great evidence of this work being begun - Paul calls it "a good work", and in writing to the Philippians said he was "persuaded that He which had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" - but one evidence is this, a sinner will flee, he will turn round, he will seek after a refuge, he will be troubled about his soul, about his sins. Perhaps when under the law, apprehended and convicted, he hardly knows where to flee. The law is relentless; it will follow a man: "Pay me that thou owest". Unless we are thoroughly convicted of our sin by God's law in the hands of the Spirit, we shall run into some subterfuge, some "refuge of lies". How many people expect to escape hell and reach heaven by a nominal belief in Christ, and their own good works! But I believe, where the Lord works, He will work effectually. Not always at once, but sooner or later He will bring every one of His people to a condition in which they feel themselves lost. Sometimes suddenly He will cut a man down and load him with a sense of sin, and

quickly bring him to repentance and faith. Sometimes it is like a moth fretting a garment until it permeates the whole. Now if your garments are moth-eaten, you will have no confidence in them to hide your shame. And if you are brought to realise what the law is, and God's righteous demands upon you in the law, you will not try to find refuge under that fiery mountain. Although we should keep the law in every point except one, that one flaw brings condemnation; and unless we continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, we are condemned. O it will cut you off, my friends, from all hope of escaping hell by your own works, if you have the work of the law wrought in your conscience!

But this work, this honourable and glorious work of the Holy Ghost, also produces submission to God. It causes a man to accept God's verdict. We read in the Gospels of one man who wriggled and wriggled and tried hard to justify himself. "Willing to justify himself" he said this, and that, and the other. But the Lord will silence all self-justification, and excuses and extenuations. "They fell down, and there was none to help". I believe the Lord will bring every one of His people there. I know He brought me there, so that I could see nothing between my soul and the bottomless pit; and God was just. You will have to justify Him. Every child of God will justify Him in the severest sentence:

And if my soul were sent to hell
Thy righteous law approves it well

Very solemn is this work then, the work of the Holy Ghost in conviction. But He does sustain. This blessed Spirit uses the law as a school master, to teach the need and value of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of it to the Galatians and says: "The law was our school master to bring us unto Christ." You may have felt - some of you may now feel - fearful that the law is the beginning of hell. You feel a hell in your conscience, and you may anticipate dropping into hell when you die. I know some of the Lord's people have things less severe; but I do believe

everyone will be brought in guilty before God.

And then what? Why, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ, the Mediator, the Refuge for sinners, reveals the work that Christ has finished. And not only that, but He reveals a living Christ at the right hand of God, the great High Priest and Mediator, through whom every convicted sinner will be led to pray to God for mercy. "Through Him", we read just now in Ephesians 2 "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". That is a real mystery, but a real experience. Under the law there is no felt access to God. You want Him, but you know you deserve His curse. But under the gospel there is hope. A person becomes a "prisoner of hope". He hopes to be delivered, he hopes in the mercy of God, and he seeks an interest in all that Jesus Christ is, and all that He has done.

You were singing just now in the hymn: "This we know, 'twas done for us". Now that will be sometimes the burden of a child of God's heart in prayer: "Lord, visit me with Thy salvation." You will pray to have the atonement on your conscience by the Spirit, pray to have redemption brought home into your heart by the sealing of the Spirit. Whatever the Lord has promised in His word, the Holy Spirit will teach His people their need of, and bring them to pray for it. There is a great mystery in prayer. The Holy Ghost is the Author of all living prayer, "making intercession for the saints according to the will of God". It is sinners, in themselves lost, helpless, unrighteous, without merit - it is those who flee and seek after refuge in Christ, an interest in His death. And they shall not seek in vain. It is by the energy of the Spirit, by the conduct of the Holy Ghost, that poor sinners are led to Christ. Wonderful, that! "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." This is an honourable and glorious work. It puts the sinner under conviction on the side of God. If you, as a repenting convicted sinner, are brought by the Spirit in faith to the footstool of divine mercy, pleading the blood of Christ and confessing your sins, there is an honourable and glorious work wrought in you. What you want is not excuse,

not extenuation, but forgiveness. And who has that forgiveness to bestow? Why, God, for Christ's sake. And the Spirit will teach you to pray for it.

Ah, but you may say some of you, mine is an unusual case. I have sinned against light and knowledge, and I still have mighty sins in my nature that threaten to overthrow me, and I am afraid I shall be defeated. Well, I believe I can sympathise with that. But what has the Lord said by His servant John? "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin." O, faith in the bleeding Lamb! It stands in the power of the Holy Ghost. The Author and Finisher of faith is Jesus Christ. By His Spirit He works it in, and His people work it out. (Philippians 2 v 12 and 13). It is the sinner who believes, but he believes by the power of the Spirit, and sooner or later he lays hold of Christ, by Christ laying hold of him. Wonderful work, that! A blessed day in the experience of the child of God, a sinner, when the Saviour and he meet! "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God".

How do sinners receive Christ? They receive Him by His own grace in His own power. He comes in and claims them, and they claim Him. "Whereof", we read, "the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us" (Hebrews 10 v 15) Of what? The death of Christ, His resurrection, and entrance into glory. And what else? "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession". Happy is that sinner, broken-hearted is that sinner, free is that sinner, humbled and crumbled is that sinner, who receives the atonement. receives the Atoner, when Christ is in his heart, the hope of glory. No one can express it I am sure of that. We can talk about it, but we can never really fully express the blessedness of finding Christ and His redeeming love and pardon in our hearts. That sinner is "rich to all the intents of bliss". And this work of the Holy Ghost is as essential as was Christ's sacrifice. I am sure we need this. It differentiates between notions about the gospel and the reception of the gospel in vital power. It makes Christ

very precious, and it produces what nothing else can, it produces repentance. The one time when I most deeply mourned and wept concerning my sins, was when I felt the Lord Jesus come in His redeeming love and tell me He had atoned for those sins, and that I belonged to Him by that purchase.

When you have an assurance that Christ suffered the hell that you deserved, in order that you might not only escape that hell, but reach heaven, it is then that you will hate sin and mourn over it. And is that not promised? "I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." (Zechariah 12 v 10) If our religion has no repentance in it, it is not the religion of the Holy Ghost. It is difficult for me to say that because I know so little of that sweet, bitter repentance. But I know just enough of it to want more, and I am thankful that the Lord Jesus, who died to redeem His people, is exalted at the right hand of God, "a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." You watch your own case tenderly in the fear of God, and you will find the very things promised in the Scripture are the things you need and desire; and you will find sometimes your mouth opened, unworthy, destitute, sinful though you feel, to ask the greatest blessings, and all of them on the ground and merit of Christ alone. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it". Jude, speaking of the conflict and the danger, and the much apostasy that would obtain, said to those to whom he wrote: "Praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Now this is a work honourable and glorious because it will make you in your own heart and conscience susceptible to conviction, and it will cause you to seek first of all the glory of God. Only that which glorifies God and satisfies Him, will satisfy a Spirit-convicted sinner. And what is that? The Person, and merit, and work of Christ. When that is in your heart you will be satisfied. It is said in one Psalm: "His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land"

(lxxxv.9) There is a glory connected with salvation, the glory of Christ's conquest. You know what is written in Malachi: "They they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be Mine when I make up My special treasure." And that will be for glory, the glory of Christ. So again Peter speaks of the trial of faith. The work of faith is the work of God the Holy Ghost in the heart. "The just shall live by his faith". But how severely it is tried! How much unbelief we have! But says Peter: "The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

"His work is honourable and glorious". Then sanctification. It is distinct, but inseparable from justification. The saints of God are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and the knowledge of that justification is brought into their hearts through faith: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." A blessed experience! "Peace with God". It means sin is pardoned; it means reconciliation through the atoning death of Christ. The state of justification is unalterable. The enjoyment of justification undulates, fluctuates. You may not always, or very seldom, feel it, but the state stands; for the righteousness of the Lord Jesus endures for ever: "His righteousness endureth for ever." Our righteousness is but as filthy rags, when considering our standing before God. Our righteousness among men as the result of grace, will be profitable to our fellow mortals. We shall live righteously, and godly, and holily amongst men, if we are born again and under the teaching of the Spirit of grace. But this righteousness which endureth for ever, is not creature righteousness; but it is the righteousness that the Lord Jesus wrought out and brought in, as is said in Daniel: "To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." (ix.24) How blessed is that!

Adam, when the tempter foiled him,
His bright robes were quickly gone;
But this righteousness of Jesus,
Once applied, 'tis always on;

and it is the title for heaven.

But then there is sanctification. We must be sanctified. Christ prayed that His people might be "sanctified through the truth". No unsanctified person reaches heaven; and I believe this, if the Holy Spirit's work is wrought in us, we shall be as concerned about sanctification as we shall be about justification. O, says a poor sinner:

Jesus' precious blood once spilt
I depend on solely,
To release and clear my guilt;
But I would be holy

And so you shall, God cannot make a person perfectly happy until He makes him completely holy. That is the attraction of heaven. But sanctification is, in part, wrought in this life. Christ is made of God to His people, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

How is that sanctification wrought in the heart? "Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" says Paul to the Thessalonians. If the Holy Spirit is in us, and that blessed Spirit leads us to Jesus Christ and gives us a view of His beauty, His glory, His suffering death, will not that have a sanctifying efficacy? Will it not separate us? Sanctification is really separation unto God. Nothing can sanctify but the knowledge of God. The dread of hell will not sanctify, nor humble; but some acquaintance with the Lord Jesus will do both. There will be a transforming power on the heart, on the soul, of one to whom Christ is revealed. I remember some years ago feeling full of pride and resentment, injured pride, humiliation, and self-pity. I was too troubled to remain indoors and went out

for a little walk; and on my way I believe the Holy Spirit brought the Lord Jesus before my mind, and I got a spiritual view of Him in that 2 Philippians: "Who though equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And I could never tell you what an influence that had upon my heart. It overcame my self-pity and pride, made me ashamed of myself, and made the Lord Jesus very precious to me; and I felt willing to do anything that would be for His glory. You will make yourself "of no reputation" if you see the humiliation of Christ. He will exalt you in a sense of His mercy, so that you will lie low at His footstool and submit to all His disposal.

This will bring in the teaching of the Holy Spirit in our various difficulties and trials. When we are in trouble, fiery trials, it is a test, a test of our faith. And it is a test of our adoption. O the rebellion that we may be guilty of, the unbelief, and sometimes the dejection, the almost despair, in trouble! But the work of the Holy Ghost is to prompt people to two things in trouble: first of all, an acknowledgement that sin is the procuring cause; and secondly, a prayer to the Lord for help, sustenance, and deliverance. That exercise will have a wholesome effect upon the soul, and you may find yourself, as once or twice I have found myself, tremblingly thanking the Lord for His chastening rod. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent." This work is honourable and glorious.

That brings me to notice briefly what the Lord Jesus declared to His disciples. He said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". If tribulation is our lot, it means that there are two parties within us, and those must be separated. The word "tribulation" is derived from the flail with which they used to thresh wheat and separate the corn from the chaff. That is what tribulation is. Strictly speaking, no unregenerate person can

have tribulation. He may have trouble, he may be soaked with it; but there will be no separation. But in the case of the child of God, by divine chastening through the Spirit, there will be a separation in trouble. You will be brought before the Lord, confessing your sins and asking Him to do you good, cleanse you, and bring you through the trouble bettered by it. And if you meet with that word in Zechariah, it may be an encouragement to you: "I will bring the third part through the fire They shall call upon My Name I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God." What a different aspect it puts upon the troubles of life, if you can detect this work of the Holy Spirit bringing you before God! And this is for glory, as that word declares in the 50 Psalm: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." You think of it, my dear friends who fear God! A poor, wretched, shabby, guilty, helpless, worthless sinner made for the glory of God! Not by his wonderful works, not by his sparkling profession, strutting about as a great Christian; but by submitting to the will of God, by praying in times of trouble and receiving succour and help, and then blessing the Lord for His goodness. "His work is honourable and glorious".

So with the fulfilment of the covenant promises. In the 1 chapter of the II Corinthians it is declared that "all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." We can never do anything to enhance the Lord's glory. Our most brilliant works are poor things. We shall be ashamed of our best. But if the Lord blesses us with answers to prayer and fulfilments of the promises, that will redound to His glory.

His glory is great in saving sinners. I have no hope of being for the glory of God, but as receiving a free-grace salvation. And what will the song be in heaven? "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood be glory and dominion". If our unworthy lips ever sing that song it will be wonderful.

Let me among Thy saints be found,
Whene'er the archangel's trump shall sound,
To see Thy smiling face;
Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.

It will be His work: "His work is honourable and glorious, and His righteousness endureth for ever."

I must leave the matter. I am sorry not to be able to preach better. The Lord knows that it is an honest confession. But may the gospel in some of its riches flow into our hearts and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and produce good works in our lives. The Apostle disowns any contribution of works towards salvation. He says: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." May the Lord pardon what has been amiss.

AMEN.