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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr J H Gosden  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Friday 28 July 1922

PSALM 126

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream", and if any of us have known what it is to be in spiritual captivity and to have that captivity turned by the Lord, who only can turn it, we shall understand what it is. "We were like them that dream", so wonderful, marvellous, desired but hardly expected, is that mighty power of God to turn spiritual captivity, and deliver captives. Everything in us as we are born naturally tends to bondage. We are born in bondage, and we love bondage naturally. Nothing is more pleasant to the natural mind than that which is essentially a most terrible bondage, and that is sin. But this word speaks of an experience of captivity, a knowledge of being in bondage, a looking for deliverance, and a desiring it, and so the people of God in their captivities do look out for deliverance, and are set upon it. What a great thing it is to have an eye on deliverance from sin. That is a great object of God with regard to His people. It is the great end of all His teaching. It is the great end for which Christ came, for which the Scripture is written, and for which it is applied to the hearts of sinners. He delivered them not only from the guilt, but from the love, and the practice, the dominion, and the power, and last, from the very being of this terrible thing, sin. But there is an experience of a turning again by the Lord of one's captivity in an experimental way which does make the soul wonder. "We were like them that dream", and it was so. When the Lord did really give to us an open door, a way out, showed us where life was, showed us how life could come to us, brought us near by Jesus Christ, and the Father gave us to see what redemption meant, and what it was to be redeemed; came and did in a moment what we could never have done for ourselves, had we lived a thousand years, "we were like them that dream". "Power belongeth unto God", and when power from God reaches the heart of a poor captive for his deliverance, even for the partial turning of that captivity, in reviving in bondage, then there is something effected which, for its suddenness, for its fullness, for the greatness of what is done, makes him like one that

dreams. When persons dream they often in a dream cover, in a short space of a few minutes, many years; a great thing is done. Many things are done when people dream, and so it is when God comes; He makes of mountains a plain. He makes of impossibilities a straight way. O, it is wonderful what a word from the Lord does in the heart of a poor captive. It needs but for Him to command deliverance and a poor soul who fears he never shall be delivered, never have a smile in his heart, never have a merry-making, never be able to rest, never really be allowed to love Christ, in a moment this is all effected by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the conscience. It is pressed in. It is amazing, and the person who has it says, concerning what is done, and what is shown, "The half was not told me". I am sure that that which brings deliverance, namely the bringing of the Deliverer by the Holy Ghost, to the understanding, and heart of a man, will make him exclaim that the half was not told him. You may have heard about Christ, and about His redeeming love, and about what redemption is, but when the Lord comes, when He speaks, and, as it were, invests His Word, as He always does when He does speak home, with life, and makes the Word that He speaks to you spirit and life, then you are like a dreamer. You say the thing is done. You were passive, had no hand in it; a sacred power was upon you. This is a very expressive word, and does express in some of us what we can never express ourselves. "We were like them that dream". "It is too good to be true", people say of a good dream superstitiously. O but this is not a dream. We do not dream when the thing is effected in us, but the thing is so good. Mercy, redemption, forgiveness, a clean conscience, some measure of liberty, and joy, and good hope through grace; a hope of heaven. All this in the place of hardness, and bondage, and fear of hell, and guilt, and pollution, and all brought by, and all centred in, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is good news from a far country, and when that news reaches the place that is made for it in the heart by the Spirit of Christ coming and bringing it, then the person wonders. It is marvellous. Then when the Lord so turned our captivity in a spiritual sense "our mouth was filled with laughter". Not that unholy hilarity that is so often seen in these days, even with the Name of Christ on the lip, not that, but a holy, sacred joy; the satisfaction of soul when the soul does live upon Christ, and find Him to be the joy of the heart. "Our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with singing". We can speak well of Christ, well of

God, of the Covenant of Grace, of redemption, of the faithfulness of God, and of the power, and love of the Holy Ghost. Our tongue was filled with singing. We sang Psalms, and hymns, in our souls, as we went about in secret. We sang in our very hearts the high praises of God. Ah, it is wonderful for a sinner, who deserves hell, and has no spiritual power at all in himself, to be caused by the power of the Holy Ghost to sing with his heart, and with his tongue, the praises of God.

"Then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them". I believe that unbelievers who observe the Lord's people when they are favoured and watch them coming out of difficulties, and out of a state of captivity, which they may have observed in their demeanour, do see the effects of grace. Sometimes it may not be so apparent to the heathen, but sometimes it is seen by them. "Then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them" And this may be so with respect to public bodies, churches; there is a turning of the captivity collectively in a church. There have been days when churches have had their captivity turned; there has been a flowing together to the goodness of the Lord.

"The LORD hath done great things for us" We agree with what they say; He has done great things for us. When the Lord helps us by shining upon what He has done; helps us by showing us He is the same today, when He turned our captivity. "The LORD hath done great things for us". What great things has the Lord done for some here. He has done this; He has chosen them to obtain salvation with eternal glory in Christ Jesus. He has given them to His Own Son. That was done for every child of God. He has also redeemed them by the blood of Christ; that is a great thing. If we know what captivity is, what it is really to be, as it were, under the heel of Satan and sin, helpless, and hopeless there, we shall not think lightly of redemption, of redemption as effected by the suffering and obedience of the Son of God; and of redemption when it is brought into our hearts. It is not a light thing to be the purchase of Christ's blood, and it is not a light thing to seek to know it, and it wont be a light thing to be assured of it. Men cannot take this for granted; they cannot say, Well Christ died for sinners, and I am a sinner, and therefore He died for

me. No, that wont turn a real captivity. It may turn a notional captivity, but when a man is really sold, in his soul experience, under sin, then he needs the bringing of what his faith sees in Christ into his soul, and the testimony of the Spirit pressing the comfort, and the life, and the deliverance of it, into his heart. "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Are you not glad that the Lord has done these things for you? Are you not glad that He convinced you of your sin? That is a great thing. We could not do it ourselves. No, we could never really have a true apprehension of what sin is, or a right feeling concerning sin, without God's power upon us in the law, by the Holy Ghost. Sin, by the commandment, and only by the spiritual application of the commandment, is known in sinners to be exceeding sinful. That is a great thing, and I believe the saints, sooner or later, will come to see the value of this more and more, and seek to have it continually effected in them

Convince us of our sin  
Then lead to Jesus' blood  
And to our wondering view reveal  
The secret love of God

Have you ever been glad of a great thing God has done for you? You may not be able to say He has forgiven your sins to your satisfaction. You may not say that you have really a solid, and serious, and powerful, and indubitable evidence in your heart that you are God's, that you belong to Christ, but you may not say that it is a small thing that He has done for you, if He has convinced you of your sin, and made this your cry - "Give me Christ or else I die". That is a great thing, and although it wont bring this heavenly laughter in the fullness of it, yet we are glad that He has done this. You may well be glad if He has done this for you, and given you some hope in His mercy; a hope that pardon will come. Ah, it is a great thing to have that before you. "I had fainted" said the Psalmist "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". And I believe the saints sometimes have a kind of gladness in their heart in the prospect of what they believe will come; that the Lord will one day bring them right out, and fulfil His promise in them "They shall walk up and down in the Name of the Lord." I believe that this is the work of God the Holy Ghost, in the lives of the people of God, to bring them

experimentally to step out of self into Christ. "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" is a lesson that we do need the Lord to continually teach us, and we are glad that He teaches us this. O, some of us know what death is, what it is to be in captivity, but to have the testimony in some measure that Richard Dore had when he said "There is a Man in heaven who loves me and whom I love", that makes a man glad. O, it is a sacred joy, then; a sweet, humble strength fills his heart then. When Israel was brought back from Babylon to build Jerusalem, they had not finished with adversaries. Soon on commencement of their building they found many adversaries, and we have still. We are subject to captivity. The Apostle Paul who knew more of pardon, and the love of Christ, and His precious blood, perhaps than most, he was subject to captivity. If you read in the 7 Romans you will see what captivity he was subject to while in the flesh, and see the experience of the church in this Psalm.

The second experience as it were, that is in this Psalm, we find in our lives; the church prays. Not only does she record the goodness of the Lord, and acknowledge what He has done for her, but she prays, being still in necessity, and, it may be, in a new state of captivity. "Turn again our captivity O LORD, as the streams in the south". If our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall want streams renewed; we shall want that life to be communicated. According to the value we set upon Christ, in just that same measure shall we desire Christ to be with us. If we draw life from the fleeting things of this mortal state, then we shall be satisfied without Christ, and that is an evil condition to be in. Better be in captivity by an absent Christ and longing for Him to pour out a stream and send it afresh to your heart than to play with a muddy puddle, and to think that that is the stream of life. O we need communications, and the promise is that he that thirsteth shall take of the water of life freely. It comes freely. Just as it came at the first, it must come again, and the saint knows this. Captivity is bitter, but it is not hopeless. O no, there is a full fountain in Christ of life and of deliverance; power to deliver, and comfort, and pardon, and all that we can need; and the saints know this. Time after time they get deliverance. You may have to wait, as you were singing. The Lord may delay for some time to give it, but He never denies it. I believe that no child of God, no poor captive soul that has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and

cannot live without another taste, will die of thirst. And this is the rule - Christ's goodness, and covenant mercy.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy". There is a certainty in this. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy". Not that tears purchase the harvest - Could our zeal no respite know, could our tears for ever flow, all this for sin could not atone; it must come freely - but there is a sowing in tears. O what weeping of soul there is after Christ by one who has felt His presence, and now feels that He is absent from him, and what suspicions there are of his case when that absence is long continued. "They that sow in tears", they that remember past good days, and their laughter, and their singing, and praises to the Lord, and whose harps are now upon the willows, and to whom their enemies come and say - "Sing us one of the songs of Zion". "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" they say mournfully. They that ask for mercy, that ask the Lord to come again according to His promise, shall reap in joy. The fulfilment is on the way, God has put out His word, has promised with His unalterable promise - "They shall reap in joy"

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed". I believe that this seed is a pleading of the soul the promise of God, what He has said. The pleading with God the testimony of the Spirit to Christ's work. It comes to that continually with some of us - Our hope is built on nothing less than the finished work of Christ. The substance of what Christ said when, on the cross, He was about to give up His spirit unto God - "It is finished" - is the life of our souls. It all comes from the atonement. That is the centre of our spiritual life and well-being, and comfort, and all the promises of God centre there and are secured there. And Christ ever lives, as our friend just now in his prayer mentioned, to make intercession, and is able to save to the uttermost. Well, though we, some of us, may be in captivity in some particular things, and though the church of God is in a captive state, a sad state of captivity, and though there may be captivity in some of our circumstances, yet deliverance is in the hands of God. May the Lord give us grace to acknowledge what He has done and to press for new communications from Himself out of that fullness that is in Him, that we may be brought again with rejoicing, bringing our answers to prayer with us. O what treasures are answers

to prayer. What sweet jewels are these visits, these places, where God has met with us. How sacred the places are, and how the recollection of them has rejoiced the heart, and how it would rejoice some of us to have a new deliverance, and a new sheaf, a new answer to prayer, that we may again attest the power of God, and have the fresh witness of the Holy Ghost to the power of Christ's blood, and of our interest in it. The Lord pardon what has been said amiss.

AMEN.