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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 15 May 1927

Text: Psalm 25 v 8 and 9

"Good and upright is the Lord therefore will He
teach sinners in the way; the meek will He
guide in judgment and the meek will He teach
His way."

God, to be God, must be good; it belongs to His perfection to be good. He is good in His eternal Being. If there had never been any discovery of God outside His own Being, this truth would be true - Good is the Lord. And He is good therefore, and because of His essential goodness in His Being, in all His works. Whatever God does, whatever He ever has done, or will do, can only be good. He is good in that He willed and willingly formed creation. Good, that in creation, He would manifest Himself. No need for God to have come as it were out of Himself. The source of all being He is, but in His own Being sufficient with no being outside Himself. His goodness is manifested in His condescension, in His willingness to create. He willed to exhibit, to manifest and communicate His goodness, not necessarily, but because He would do it. This truth is a very great one, and, as apprehended by us, will enhance in our view the goodness of God. Good He was in that He would communicate goodness and so that as you read in Genesis first and second chapters, He created. In six days He made heaven and earth and man and all things that are. Men deny it; they declare that millions of years have gone to form the earth as it is, but the word of God shall stand for ever, when men who deny that word will be crumbling in the dust and dying in the denial of it, their souls howling in hell. He created; He said "Let there be and there was". He made the lights; He made the herbs; He created beast and man upon the earth, upon which He had so formed. And this was goodness so that all the creatures, all the creation which came out of His hand, He whose standard is absolutely above all standards, could say of what He had made it

is good. We have no account in the scriptures of the creation of angels, but that they were created is without controversy, by God. And we have the account of the creation of man, how that God said "Let us make man after our image" and He made man, created him in the likeness of God; made him morally perfect, capable of knowing, serving and enjoying God. This was goodness, goodness manifested and communicated, for a creature man, to be made by God, with all these moral faculties and excellencies which were capable of receiving continual communications from God, and of communicating, communing with God according to the perfection of that created nature, so that the goodness of God was in the enjoyment of Adam in his innocence in Eden's garden. The Lord is good; His goodness is therein manifested.

Now so far, most men, natural men, who are not professed infidels, will go; they allow God to be good so far, but I must say next that the Lord is good, just good, in all that He permits. He made man upright. Man, by the instigation of the devil, fallen spirit, fell from his uprightness. Who could say, who dare assert the blasphemy that God, had He willed it, could not have prevented that? But He allowed it. May we never venture to tread upon so solemn and awful a truth with carnal reason in our hearts, but may we approach it under the awful sense of God's absolute sovereignty and rule. The serpent, a fallen angel, the devil, came to that good man, that good woman Eve, in all her innocence and purity in the garden wherein our first parents enjoyed the goodness of God to the fulness of the capacity of their nature, and injected into her mind the seed of infidelity. "Hath God said that thou shalt not eat of every tree of the garden" First of all you see he suggested that God was not good; impinged her mind upon one exception in the whole of the garden, that exception being set up by God's goodness. It is necessary that creatures, moral creatures, should have a rule whereby to live, and this was Adam's rule, that he could receive all the goodness of that garden as from his Creator and enjoy Him in it except only one which he was not to touch. Then, having injected this thought against the goodness of God in giving this rule and making this one test of obedience, he injected the seed of infidelity - "Thou shalt not surely die". And Eve believed

the devil and disbelieved God and took the forbidden fruit and involved the whole human race in the death which God had denounced against disobedience. When God came to Adam in the garden, and Adam sought to hide himself, which he had never done before, He said "Adam, where art thou". Then he said "I was naked and I hid myself"; then he excused himself. Sin had begun to come in, then he shifted on to Eve and said - "The woman Thou gavest to be with me;"- obliquely as it were, impinged God's goodness in giving a helpmeet to him, which was His goodness - "The woman Thou gavest to be with me, she took of the fruit and gave me and I did eat". Now God's goodness is in what followed; He drove out the man and the woman from the garden. His goodness is in His justice; that is to say, what God commanded, what God declared, the terrible curse He denounced against disobedience, He must, in His goodness fulfil, and He did. He drove them out of the garden and put there a flaming sword which turned every way, keeping the way to the tree of life, lest the man should take of that tree and become, said He, as one of us. Now that was the beginning of sin; who can bound the issues thereof? That was the beginning of all the confusion, all the infidelity in man and all the consequent misery in the human race; that was the spring of it. And so, as we read in the Romans - "That by one man's disobedience many were made sinners". You were made a sinner by that disobedience, and I was made a sinner by that disobedience, and we are sinners, and the Lord God has said - "That the wages of sin is death". And I will say this, that God is good in the exercise of His justice. The idea of God's goodness that does not include and embrace God's goodness in His justice, is short and therefore false, and especially as we men are now sinners, being born in sin, sinners by nature, we must embrace God's justice because that justice is against us, and God is good in punishing sin. His character would be sullied, His holiness would be infringed, if He did not punish sin. That is an awful truth - the goodness of God, in view of His justice, His awful goodness, but He must either change or punish.

He was good and is good in another way, in another manifestation - good in Himself first, before that goodness was manifested - and that is His goodness, in determining the

covenant of grace; good in His eternal election of men unto eternal life; good in settling in Eternity, before any being was but Himself, upon some men to be created, His blessings for Eternity; good in determining upon the new creation, in willing that His dear Son should have a people for His praise. This goodness in God was hidden in God until He condescended to manifest that goodness and that was immediately after the fall of man. The first manifestation of that goodness of God was in that first promise made in defiled Eden to our first parents. The Lord said to the serpent "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". That seed of the woman was His Eternal Son to be incarnate in the fulness of time. O the goodness of God came into that garden in that promise. That promise therefore entailed Christ's coming, man's sinful misery drawing Him to destroy Satan who, by His awful injections into the human race, caused man's fall, and bruised the church. Therefore the Psalmist in this Psalm, not only says good, but good and upright is the Lord, because uprightness in God has to do with His walking and working, not according to, merely His own will, but His own revealed will. What He reveals and promises, it is upright in God to accomplish and fulfil. He is good in promising, and He is upright in fulfilling, and He fulfilled that. In the fulness of the time which God the Father had appointed, He sent forth His Eternal Son who eternally was with Him in His bosom, sent Him forth by way of Mary. He became Man. O the goodness, the uprightness of God in this. Take all the intervening generations between the promise in Eden, and the time when the Lord Jesus came; and just scan the provocations that were offered to God; how that, soon after, when He looked upon man, He saw that the whole imagination and the thought and intention of the heart of man was evil and only evil and that continually. That is expressive of the nature and the pursuit of human nature as fallen off from God. And see how, in spite of God's goodness, after the flood, to men, they provoked Him, they disbelieved Him, they set up idols and worshipped gods of wood and stone. And His own nation Israel, chosen by Him to be a nation in type, of the election of grace, blessed with so many peculiar and signal blessings, as a nation; in the midst of which He set up His worship; see how that nation went from Him and provoked Him and

vexed His Holy Spirit and right on we can see how that men provoked God, and yet the uprightness of God was not in the slightest degree deflected from His promise, so at the exact time appointed in His will, God sent forth His Son. He is upright in sending His dear Son to be the Saviour of the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" and He gave His only begotten Son freely. But He promised to send His only begotten Son, and having promised it, no provocation of sin in man would in the least divert Him from the uprightness which is essential to Him and marked all His workings. So He sent Him on that glorious day when that promise was fulfilled. And the Lord God from heaven came, the second Adam

But lo the second Adam came
The serpent's subtle head to bruise

and what a Person He was, He is! The seed of the woman, not a man by ordinary generation. It is a very remarkable thing that the peculiar manner of Christ's entrance into the world was even in Eden set forth - "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He was born miraculously; that holy thing which was born of the virgin Mary, a holy, pure, perfect humanity, was called the Son of God, because the Eternal Son of the Father, immediately upon its conception, took it as His own, into union with His Eternal Person. He shall be called the Son of God. He is the Son of God. Nothing less than this could accomplish the promise; nothing less than this could in any way redeem men from the curse due to their sin and deliver a perishing world from eternally sinking into perdition. And so God in His goodness, in His goodness in respect to justice, and His uprightness in regard to His promise, sent His dear Son. Divine perfections will never be found in any of the works of God, to clash. Justice and mercy, truth and righteousness, goodness and wrath, all these, for wrath is a perfection in God; wrath is not a sinful affection of the mind as it is in us, it is a perfection in God. He must, being God, exercise His anger against sinners, and all these, His attributes and perfections, will, in His works be seen never to clash, and in the Person of His Incarnate Son they all are sweetly harmonised. Now if this truth is received by any

poor sinful man here, convinced of his sins, it will do several things in his heart and one thing it will do, it will relieve him from the bondage and terror and dismay and despair which a sense of sin, and a knowledge of God's holy justice produce. Perhaps some of you can remember when you first, in a very faint way, saw how that these two great principles, and perfections in God, were united in harmony in Jesus Christ - His justice and His love; His power and His goodness and His mercy and His truth and His holiness. It softened your heart; it saved you from your terrible rebellion and hardness and prayerlessness; it enabled you to call on that great God whose name was so terrible to you because you were such a sinner against Him as that you hardly dare call on Him, and could not feelingly pray to Him before; it opened your mouth and enabled you to ask Him for mercy. The least ray of this goodness and uprightness in God will do that.

"Good and upright is the Lord". And notice now for a moment, the connection of this declaration of the Psalmist here. It is a declaration; he had been praying previously, and he, as it were, turns to consider and meditate upon the foundation and support of his prayer. He had been mentioning in God's ear, his sin - "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy, remember Thou me, for Thy goodness sake O Lord." 'Tis a great thing to have addressed to God out of a feeling sense of your sins, remembering them yourself, then asking God not to remember you according to them, nor to remember your sins against you, and it evidently was a great thing to David and so it seems as if, leaving the prayer for a moment, he meditates upon the foundation of this, his petition, whether it had a good footing, and it had, and this was the footing of it - "Good and upright is the Lord". Good in Himself; good in His works; good in His holiness; good in His justice; good in the denunciation of the curse against sinners; good in His promise and upright to perform it. Therefore, says David, I may ask for mercy, though I am a sinner; I may ask Him to bless me and to take away the guilt of my sin, and not to pour upon me the curse I deserve. Good and upright is the Lord.

Next, one would say this, He is good in His absolute

sovereignty in choosing whom He will display and manifest His goodness and love and mercy towards. He is good in His eternal will. Says He "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy". Did your heart ever receive that truth, sinner, that God is good in His choice. He is, and if ever it is made known to us, in any of us here, that He chose us to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, we shall see and feel that goodness. It is only the goodness of God that made Him choose. If it depended on goodness in the person chosen, then none would be chosen, at least I am sure I should not be, and I believe every true believer here will say the same. And when he knows, by the witness of the Spirit, feels it in his heart, that God did from Eternity choose him and give him to His Son - "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me - "Why" then he says in his heart "Why me, O blessed God, why such a wretch as me". He is good in choosing, good in putting poor men into the number of His elect; a number that cannot be reckoned by man; a number that no man can number out of all kindreds and tribes and tongues and nations out of the world. He brings them, having chosen them, He brings them out." I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." They are not of the world. The world, that is the others, hate them. But they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

And He is good next in this, in calling His chosen ones and upright in calling them too, for, having chosen them and having given them to His dear Son and His dear Son having, by His precious life and death, purchased them, redeemed them by His blood, He is upright in calling them. He never leaves His work half done; He does not choose people and then leave them in their death and ruin. He calls them and this is His goodness and uprightness. And, preserved in Jesus Christ in the power of God, they are called in His own time. Some are preserved long before they are called. There may be some here who are the objects of God's eternal goodness, but are not yet, as to their experience, the subjects of it. I trust it may be so, if there are any here dead in trespasses and sins, and that the time may come when this uprightness of the Lord shall be manifested by the calling of you, by the putting into your hearts His holy fear, by His

convicting in your consciences, showing you according to His word how that you are sinners and therefore do sin against God. Good and upright is the Lord.

"Therefore will He teach sinners in the way". It is a very strange application of this foundation truth - because God is upright and good, therefore will He teach sinners in the way. It is only by this goodness and uprightness of God, as seen in and through and by the death of His dear Son, that one can properly deduce this from it. Therefore will He teach sinners in the way. If He were not upright to His promise He would not teach sinners in the way; He would simply curse them and send them to hell. But because He is upright, because He is faithful to His dear Son, because His Son once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, because He rendered to God satisfaction for the sins of His people and magnified the law of God and made it honourable, because He restored that which He took not away, in His own sacred and holy Person, therefore having done that, God is faithful, upright in teaching sinners in the way. Taking a poor sinful, hell deserving wretch, and instead of summarily banishing him into eternal woe, teaching him, teaching him what he is. He will teach you that, poor sinner; He wont let you be ignorant of yourself. We need that teaching. You may acknowledge that you are a sinner, many men do that, but it needs the teaching of God to bring conviction into the conscience, and guilt there that is intolerable. "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will convince, or reprove, the world of sin". This is the uprightness of God; it is the consequence of Christ's death, the coming of the Holy Spirit, to teach men in the way, sinners though they are, and therefore deserving nothing. A sinner cannot deserve anything of God, but God's goodness and uprightness blended in the person and merit and death of Jesus Christ, these are exercised in teaching a person who has no merit in himself, teaching him in the way. And my friends, He teaches to profit. What you acquire by dint of study will do you no good, except in that study the Holy Spirit instructs you. I would not speak against diligent study, for the Lord says in His word - search the Scriptures - but then if we search with might and main without the Holy Ghost we shall be as blind as bats, when we have

finished. But when the Holy Spirit comes with His illuminating power, and shines into the heart, and perhaps upon the scriptures as a man is just cursorily reading scriptures, and penetrates his heart with some "light of conviction, that is the goodness and uprightness of the Lord and that is profitable teaching. It is teaching that has love in it, and has an effect in it. When this teaching began in some of you, you thought not much perhaps of the goodness or of the mercy of God; you only thought of His justice, and His terrible wrath. It is so. The Lord, when He thundered forth from Sinai's mountain upon and toward the people of Israel, they trembled greatly. Moses too, he trembled, and they said to Moses, speak thou with us and we will hear. Let not God speak to us any more, lest we die. That is what a sinner feels when the justice of God in His holy law shines into his soul. But it is good; it is uprightness. Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and teacheth him out of Thy law; troublesome though to the flesh, but it is goodness in God, uprightness in God. The Holy Spirit does not forget to quicken every person in His own time for whom Christ the Redeemer died.

"Teach sinners in the way". Yes He will teach you that you have got nothing and that you are nothing but vanity. Every man in his best state is altogether less and lighter than vanity. He will teach you that sinner. It is not an easy lesson for a proud man to learn but the Lord teaches to profit, not to please always. He has soul profit in view. He has a conformity to the image of His dear Son in His purpose, so He teaches men lessons it is needful for them to learn. I would never have learned, and I have not learned much of it yet, never have learned any of this but for the gracious patience of the Holy Ghost. He empties whom He fills; He kills whom He makes alive; He wounds whom He heals; He convinces whom He forgives. "Therefore will He teach sinners in the way". Now if you believe in God, if eternity in your mind assumes any serious proportions and it is seriously important - eternity, what is it compared with time? Why it swallows up time. If, I say, you believe in God and you do believe that God teaches sinners, I know what you will say. You will say O God teach me; O let me not remain in my native ignorance. There is no knowledge of God by nature. Friends, you

may think a lot about God; you may form a God in your judgment, but there is no knowledge of God possible for fallen man without the Holy Ghost. And the vengeance of God will fall upon, we read in Thessalonians, all them that know not God. It is a very awful thing to be ignorant of God and, says the Lord Jesus in the 17th chapter of John's gospel, - "this is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God." But then when He teaches you about God it does not seem like eternal life, it seems like eternal death. But, said the Lord Jesus, "and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." So this blessed teacher goes on to teach and when He has made a man see and feel himself to be a lost and ruined sinner, when he brings him down to beggary, in dust and ruin, and self despair, then he teaches him in the way of salvation. Yes, He not only teaches him in the way of justice, but in the way of salvation. Teaches him what? Why this, that He can be just and hate sin and love and bless and forgive a sinner. That is a wonderful piece of teaching. You will never believe it unless the Spirit enable you to. You who know what sin is in some measure, when the Holy Spirit just shows you who Christ is and, that that Holy One of Israel, the Son of God incarnate, did in His own body on the tree, bear the sins of an innumerable company of wretched sinners, like you, then you will believe what the Spirit teaches you of that Holy God, whose vengeance you have dreaded, whose law you have broken, against whom your fallen nature is enmity; that very God, before whom you must stand and given an account of yourself, can hate your sin and punish sin, and yet love and absolve and bless and receive you, because He punished sin in the Person of His dear Son. What the law could not do, the Holy Spirit teaches poor men that God has done, by and in His dear Son. "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." And the Lord, the Spirit, will teach you how to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. That is, He will teach you to put your trust alone in the merits of Christ and not partly in Him and partly in your own efforts. He will teach you that it is a blasphemy for those who say that you must not trust in the Lord Jesus. You know one came

to the Jews when they were in trouble, and said to them - Let not Hezekiah deceive you in telling you that He will deliver you and in persuading you to trust in the Lord. That is devilish. If anything in you, poor sinner, says you must not trust in Jesus Christ, but you must do something first, remember, that is devilish. A sinner may trust in Christ; there is no other ground of trust; and the Spirit will teach you to put your trust in Him. Oh what a ground that is; it will bring you off your own standing - mire and mud and sinking, the Spirit will make you know that to be - and set your feet upon a Rock, even Christ Jesus, and then you will have a song in your mouth, or in your heart. Oh every person who is brought off himself and off law grounds and brought onto gospel promises feels in his heart at least a little desire to bless the Lord for that standing.

"Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach sinners in the way". He will teach you how to come to God; not a little piece of teaching that, for a man who, in his very soul, mournfully says, "I thirst for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God". He will teach you, poor sinner, to feel ignorance is a great mercy in this particular thing. A man who is wise enough to find his own way to God will find one day, if he dies in that wisdom unbroken, that he is in hell and banished from God eternally. But the poor man, who feels that he is dark and blind, unworthy, unable, unfit, to appear before God, yet longs to do so, believing Him to be the source of blessedness and life, that person will be taught. He will teach sinners how to come to God in the way of prayer; He will teach you how to manage prayer; how to approach the great I AM and how is that? He will make you see that in the Lord Jesus Christ God is pleased with a sinner, God is able to meet with a sinner and commune with him because He has set Him forth to be the propitiation for sin. Nothing but anger on the face of God if you go in any other way sinner, but O what a teaching that has been in my heart sometimes. Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for our sins. Propitiation means kindness, a smile, acceptance, goodness, mercy. It means undeserved mercy; it means appeased anger. He will teach you this, and you will know it when He teaches you. And when He teaches you in the way, you will go in that way; you

will go by prayer and supplication and make your requests known to this great God. And what a strength it puts into the heart to have this teaching. When God teaches you, you have, as it were, in your very soul a warrant to go to God. You must perhaps some of you understand this, what it is to feel you must not go to God. You, an ignorant, sinful, wretched, unworthy person, not like the people of God, you must never think of entering the presence of that Holy Majesty. Yea, the Spirit will never teach you that that Holy Majesty is less awful, but He will teach you that though His Majesty is so great and His holiness is so great yet, on His own warrant, you may go and take with you His own blessed word that His dear Son is the propitiation for sin. An unworthy sinner coming to God with nothing at all but ruin and sin and misery in the Name and merits of the Lord Jesus, asking Him, the great God, to pardon him, to bless him, to justify him, to cleanse him, to receive him, to instruct him and to save him. The Spirit will teach you this; you wont learn it as a mere opinion but He will teach you in the way. You will be in it and He will guide you along it; you will walk in it; you will be a praying man, a confessing man, a believing man, a trusting man, and though your trust may often be very weak, yet as the Spirit teaches you how trustworthy the Lord Jesus is, how all sufficient His precious blood and righteousness are, then you will be in the way, taught and following the teaching; He wont leave you; He will hold you. I will hold thee by the hand and will keep thee in the way. Why, I know this, you do, some of you, that unless the Lord taught us in the way we should refuse His teaching and go out of it. We have wandered out of it; I have in my heart wandered away from the good way of supplication and confession and prayer and dependence on the Lord; wandered away from diligent searching for Him in the Scriptures and at the Throne of Grace; become independent in spirit, prayerless and dead. Oh how solemn that is. Then He will teach you and bring you into the way again, He will. He does not teach sinners at first and put them in the way and say now you manage. He did that with Adam; He gave Adam perfection, sufficiency, ability, every qualification of mind and soul to fulfil every jot and tittle of the moral law; ability to serve God, and it was for his good, but Adam soon lost his whole stock. But He does not do that now.

He teaches a poor sinner - his flesh cannot bear the lesson - but He teaches a poor sinner that the fulness of grace, the fulness of merit, and all the fulness of imperishable righteousness is in the Lord Jesus. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". Well, this is what God, a great and Holy God, does with men, who by their own desert, ought to be in hell. He does it in some measure to some of us. Is not that kindness, and goodness and mercy? O what the blood of Christ has done. All this comes through the precious death of Jesus. May we know it.

AMEN.