

279
1180e
La G 692

1180e

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

11/2/51

Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
on Sunday evening 14 July 1929

PSALM 27 verses 8 and 9

"When Thou saidst 'Seek ye My face' my heart
said unto Thee, 'Thy face Lord will I seek. Hide
not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away
in anger; Thou hast been my help, leave me not neither
forsake me, O God of my salvation'".

These are the expressions of living faith from the heart of a true Christian, a man who could say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid", which goes to show this, that there is a difference, a difference in experience between the powerful, sweet, transforming views and visits that a soul gets of the Lord, and that exercise of faith which, for the most part, is in seeking after those views and visits. A true believer cannot but be troubled, perplexed and cast down, when the sweet visits of the Lord are suspended, but he is not in despair. And that is a great mercy, a great mercy when in trouble to be able to say "I know whom I have believed", and a man can say that, even when his heart is not at the present ravished with the feeling sense of the love of Christ. It has been well said, often said, by the people who have known the power of divine love, that very little of it can be borne by us in this our present frail state, and yet those who have known the sweetness of divine love, and the power of divine truth, and the glory of Christ as revealed in the heart, though they must say they could not bear much of it, would fain have more. True love and true faith will always be after their object, and their object is God in Christ.

This morning I spake a good deal in respect of what might be termed experimental, subjective religion but always, where there is experience and a true subjective religion, there is, deeper, higher, broader, wider than all, an object from which all religion comes, to whom 'the hearts' of all, who are the subjects

of true faith, aspire. They look for Him; they go out after Him; and they draw their life, their support, their comfort, their grace, and all that they have, worth having, from Himself. And the Psalmist, in the text, gives to the Lord God his view in acknowledging that it was His saying to him - "Seek ye My face", that caused him to seek it; an acknowledgement we should give to Him. O seeking people, how is it if you are seeking, and how is it you are kept seeking? Why have not you gone back? Why did you ever start seeking the Lord? Why are you not like other men, seeking after the vanities and pleasures of this life, or satisfied with religion without God? Why is it? There is only one answer, and that is the grace, the exceeding abundant grace of God toward you. Who maketh thee to differ? Who maketh thee a mourner? Who causeth thee to long and enquire and to say "Sirs, we would see Jesus". It is the Spirit of grace, the Holy Ghost who comes to the people chosen of God, and instructs them into their true need and into their true welfare even in God.

"When Thou saidst 'Seek ye My face' my heart said unto Thee 'Thy face Lord will I seek'". And the face of God which is to be seen is that concerning which we just now read in the Corinthians. It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Person of Christ. It is the gospel; it is the manifestation of God in the riches of His grace as revealed in the Person of His incarnate Son. That is it that is hid from the wise and prudent, and hid to those who are under the power of the god of this world, but is revealed to babes. "Seek ye My face". "My heart said unto Thee, 'Thy face Lord will I seek'". The will of man is in and under bondage when under the law and in a natural state, but I believe that when the Holy Ghost comes with power to a man, his will is made free, and he is inclined in his affections, and therefore in his will, he is inclined to those things which make for his eternal peace and the glory of God. And in that respect, I believe in freewill, believe that the child of God, the poor sinner, born again by the Holy Ghost, the washing of regeneration, is constrained, through his affections, to choose that good part which shall never be taken away. It is not the choice of a man dead, choosing to live; it is not the

choice of a person who allows God to save him. It is the choice of a man whose heart is affected by the power of grace. "When Thou saidst, seek ye My face", when Thou saidst it in my heart, when Thou madest in my heart a place for Thyself, when Thou didst create there a longing desire to be blessed of Thee, when Thou didst make Thyself most needful to me so as that without Thee I could not rest; when Thou didst that, then my heart said "I will seek Thee". I had a resolve in my will, I determined to follow Thy kind and merciful direction. There is something deliberate about this as you know, who have been, or are under, the power of God. There is some understanding in what the sinner does. He does not flounder, rushing here and there, when the Lord says in his heart, not necessarily by word, but by divine power, and if I might say so, invitation, "Seek ye My face", although perhaps in first conviction there may be a great deal of confusion and running hither and thither. But when the Lord says "Seek ye My face" there is a deliberateness. The man says - Now I know what I want, and I know what I want is obtainable. I know if I get what is before me in the gospel, then I shall be satisfied, and this is the faith of God's gift and operation.

But, as we said this morning, there is the difficulty, the fears, the changes, the set-backs, the many, many hindrances that are found from within and from without in a truly seeking soul. I would not mock any seeking soul by telling him that it is easy work to seek, but I would declare this that the God that is sought, is faithful; that He is worth seeking after, and waiting for and that "He does not say to the seeking seed of Israel, 'Seek ye Me' in vain" He declares things that are right. When He causes a man to seek He has a determination to allow Himself to be found by that man. He has a determination to bless that man. It is His goodness let out to the sinner that makes the sinner seek. "Good and upright is the Lord therefore will He teach sinners in the way".

"Thou hast been my help". This put as it were, in the heart of this poor troubled man, this praying person, this truly seeking man, it put into his heart a plea - "Thou hast been my

help" What a great thing it is to be able, quietly, deliberately, in trouble, to sit down and consider what God has done for you, especially when in trouble and tempted, you are guilty. There is a word that comes to my mind in this connection which has a great deal of importance in it. You know when the people of Israel sought after a king, determined to have a king, God gave them one, gave them Saul, in His wrath, and that wrath was manifested in several ways. Among others, it was manifested by thunder and lightning in harvest. And the people were afraid and said to Samuel - We have sinned in asking for a king. Samuel said to them - You have done this great wickedness, but turn ye not aside else you would seek after vain things, for consider what great things the Lord hath done for you. And among the things that He had done for Israel, Samuel reminds them, He had made them His people. And perhaps some of you now in present troubles, exercises and temptations and darkness have to look back upon the day when the Lord helped you to believe, when He first overcame in your heart the awful power of unbelief, and created faith in you, so as that you really believed in Him; when He became real in your heart. You did not, at that time, feel that He was yours, but there was faith. The record that God had given of His dear Son in the Scriptures, or through the preaching of Christ, got a place in your heart and you believed. That is something to look back upon. "Thou hast been my help". Again, has not the Lord been our help, some of us, when we were on the verge of despair, turned aside the fatal hour, and caused us once more, when we had lost our God and our hope and our righteousness and our light and all that we had had, to believe; to believe that He was the same; to believe that He could save us; to believe that if it were His will He could even save us from going into the pit, and raised up in our heart a sweet hope that we should never go there. Is not that worth looking back upon? And as you look back upon it, do you not find a plea in that the Lord did that for you. And has He not helped you with His word. Can you not remember when perhaps you found in your heart a kind word from God, if not with great power, yet with some effect in your heart; a guiding word prompting you to pray, directing you to the throne of grace, telling you how to go with

confession of your sins; putting a plea in your mouth, the blood of Jesus Christ. O the helps that people get from the Word of God. Has He never helped you? When you have been miserable and wretched and low and depressed and unbelieving, with a sense of your own unworthiness and weakness and poverty, has He never looked upon you and said, if not in word, in effect, "Fear not worm Jacob, I will help thee". And that word of promise is a help in itself, as well as a promise of help. Has He never helped you with His Word? When feeling so poor of grace and so weak in consequence through guilt, has He never enabled you, called you by His Word, to turn to the strong for strength. "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus". O how that helps a man away from all legality and strengthens him in the Lord. And has He never helped you in trouble and said to you - "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee". And have you not found relief in prayer? When you have been in trouble has He not permitted you to come to His seat and there make known your requests? And has He not helped you when, in trouble, you have been full of rebellion, and brought down your heart, though it has been with labour, and then, when He has brought you down, enabling you to submit, comforted you, with the comforts of His love. "Thou hast been my help". In how many ways the family of God are helped, almost numberless times; here more distinctly, there less distinctly, but helped along day by day. Some waymark, some particular points, some hills Mizah you have in your eye, and many things you may have forgotten. Now the use of these things is to plead them before the Lord. "Thou hast been my help". I acknowledge Thy kindness in days past, but I need Thee to manifest Thy kindness and mercy now. And when you remember the Lord's help, and remember too that (perhaps at the present time you may remember it) from the time the Lord guided you, and you, in your spirit turned away from Him, O how distant you have got from Him. And now you remember the helps and remember what your unkindness toward the Lord has brought to you. Thy transgressions, thy iniquities, thy sins have separated between you and your God. Does a seeking soul know that? Does a man who is earnest sometimes for God and Christ and salvation and heaven, does he come to that experience? I do not suppose

there is a seeking soul here that has been any time seeking the Lord, but comes to that experience, and so, although he does plead with the Lord what He has done for him, he has to go deeper than that. O he has to bring all these things to the Lord that he can remember, that he hopes the Lord did for him, and confess to the Lord that he has basely requited Him for His goodness; as it were, make an offering of these things to the Lord as Abraham made an offering of Isaac to the Lord. He offered up the holy promise when he offered up Isaac, and the people of God have to do this sometimes; bring all their past experience to the Lord, put it into His hand and ask Him now just to ratify the whole by a new blessing if He will. That is a venture of faith, a secret that the people of God only know and that is not casting away your confidence. Says the Holy Ghost by the Apostle Paul - "Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward". But a man does not hold fast his confidence when he is in trouble. When he fears that the Lord has something against him, he does not hold fast his confidence. When in that state he just says "Well, the Lord has done something for me in the past" and leaves it at that. No, that is not holding fast. That may be a vain confidence; that may lead to formality or setting down in a wrong state. O, but when you are compelled to take the past to the Lord, you will find profit. And together with this there is a fresh seeking the Lord, a fresh seeking that will search and examine and test you and your things and bring all to the light; detect, destroy what is not His own, and confirm His own work and confirm you in the testimony of Jesus. We want new things my friends; if we are living souls, we want daily bread; we want as much of heaven here, that is the presence of God here, communications with heaven here, as the Lord will kindly grant, and we cannot live long without feeling the effects of the withholding of such communications if we have the life of God.

"Thou hast been my help". And sometimes you may look back upon these helps and see how unworthy you were when the Lord helped you; how that He came to you sovereignly, and what it did for you, and that will help you to ask Him to come again. O but our unworthiness increases does it not? We do not feel worthy

now, so worthy as we were at the beginning. Though we were unworthy then, our unworthiness increases as we feel, and so, under a sense of this, with a sense of the unworthiness and guilt that you have, there will be a deprecating of the Lord's leaving you. I see much more reason in myself now in what I am for the Lord to leave me alone and forsake me than I did at the beginning. Nothing of our own, nothing, can be put to our name, but sin. Nothing have we to our credit, but sin.

"Leave me not neither forsake me" O but a man says, the Lord says He never will forsake His people. It is one thing to read that in the Bible; it is another thing to have the Lord tell you He will never forsake you. Perhaps some here have had that word spoken to their hearts by the Lord - "I will never forsake thee; I will not fail thee." That helped you did it not? It helped you for that then present time; it helped you in looking forward to troubles and difficulties. But now you need the fulfilment of that work again, and so, in that respect, past helps, as they have taken the form of promises, are exceedingly useful when faith in the faithfulness of God is active. O, says a sinner to the Lord "Lord Thou didst say; Thou didst promise; Thou didst say Thou wouldst not fail me. Thou didst tell me that sin should not have dominion over me. O fulfil Thy promise Lord. Promises that the Lord gives in respect of the soul will never be exhausted. They are as full as God is full. Only we need to have them renewed in the fulfilment of them in our own hearts. "Leave me not neither forsake me O God of my salvation".

Now for a little time, as the Lord may help me, I want to direct you to the great object that was before the Psalmist, that object that enabled him, in all his difficult circumstances and soul exercises, thus to pray "O God of my salvation". This is the great object of the soul, the great object of faith, of worship; the great object of prayer; a mighty God, the God of salvation. Says the Psalmist "of my salvation". And God is the God of salvation, of salvation in the fullest sense. Without God we cannot but be without hope and eternally lost. Without God we are

H eternally incomplete; we must be eternally cursed. No blessing without God; no mercy but from God in Christ; no satisfaction to the immortal soul but in communion with the great God. "O God of my salvation". Can you say as much as that to Him? Did He ever shine forth as the God of salvation into your heart? Can you say, you who have had the thunder of Sinai and the darkness and blackness and tempest of the legal dispensation in your consciences, that the power and light and sweetness and attractiveness of the gospel has ever shone into your hearts? Has God ever been attractive to you in respect of salvation? Have you been enabled to see, to believe, sometimes that in God is the salvation of Israel? He makes Himself known as the God of salvation to the faith of poor sinners. This becomes their object. God, whom they have, under the law, dreaded, whose justice and holiness they have trembled at, becomes an attraction to them. A God supremely kind; a God who is able to save to the uttermost; a God who can save in every circumstance and beyond every circumstance eternally. This God, God in Christ, is the object of a sinner when the Holy Ghost manifests that object to him. Is He our object? Have we been constrained to follow after God in our hearts? Is there the motion of faith towards Him, the feeling after Him? Do we believe in God? These are questions that may seem impertinent, but it would be well for us to put them to ourselves, especially the last question. Do we believe in God? O how much religion we may have without believing in God, without believing in Him as He is revealed in the Scriptures. God who is infinite in perfection and holiness; who is Almighty God, without whom no person can really be complete; God who is the source of all blessedness and patience and comfort of hope and love. O, it is a great thing so to believe in God, in God all sufficient; all sufficient for every emergency; with whom is no emergency; who can meet every need of every kind that any poor sinner can ever have - God, all sufficient. It is a great title of the Lord God, Jehovah all sufficient, and when you see Him so, by faith, in the Scriptures and feel in your soul your need, O how you will go out to Him; how you will feel after Him; how you will pant to know and to receive out of His all-sufficiency for your present time circumstantial, spiritual and

eternal needs.

"Leave me not neither forsake me O God of my salvation". And this salvation is very great. God is the God of a real salvation, a salvation in the widest sense of the word "salvation". He saves from hell; He saves with an everlasting salvation all of the persons of His elect; He saves from sin, from its dominion, from the guilt of it, from the love of it. He saves from Satan and the powers of hell. He saves from condemnation; He saves His people from all their fears. He saves them from their poverty; He saves them from their misery; He saves them from everything that would hurt them. He is the God of salvation. Now when faith is strengthened to go out after its object it has some apprehension of that object. The fulness, the blessedness, the all-sufficiency of God, as that fulness, blessedness, and all-sufficiency are revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, is a mighty attraction, a strength, an encouragement to a weak sinner, and he says "This is the God of salvation". And when, and if, the Lord gives him liberty to say warrant in his heart to say, by the Spirit's testimony within, "The God of my salvation", what a relief that is. Why, he says, although at present I am in trouble, I shall be delivered. Although I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me. Although the enemy would seem to rejoice over me, I can say to him - "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me." This God of salvation believed in, creates in the soul, hope, and, says the Holy Ghost by the Apostle in the Romans - "We are saved by hope". Salvation is a great thing in the church, attaching to its eternal glory. Salvation beautifies the meek; salvation puts a glory upon sinners; salvation makes saints of sinners, makes children of rebels. Salvation brings comfort to wretches; salvation brings heaven into those consciences that have felt hell and God is the author of this great salvation.

And I might speak about this God of salvation and will, briefly, in this way - that the God of salvation is the eternal Trinity. May we never tire of considering the Trinity in unity.

You may say, well now, but you are getting away from experience, from a subjective religion. Well, but you will never have experience, never have anything in your hearts as subjects of grace and salvation but from that blessed God of whom the Scriptures declare He is a Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is not a bare salvation that the Psalmist sought after, but the God of salvation. Salvation is great; the God of salvation is greater, and men who have salvation have the God of salvation for their God, and to have the God of salvation is having something in prospect more than bare salvation as that may mean escaping hell and punishment. O my friends, the God of salvation as revealed in His eternal Trinity is the source of joy and comfort and glory and eternal felicity to the church of Christ. The Psalmist says in one Psalm "I will go to God, to God my exceeding joy" not only because He saves from hell, which He does, but because He beautifies and glorifies and justifies. And so this great Triune God is expressed in the Romans in this way "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate and whom He did predestinate them He also called and whom He called them He also justified and whom He justified them He also glorified" And in those sacred truths, as the source of them, is the eternal Trinity, the God of salvation; the Father in predestination, in election; the Son in coming and redeeming and justifying by His blood; and the Spirit in quickening and calling. And the issue is that such people as are the elect of God, against whom none can bring, successfully, any charges, they shall be all glorified. And can troubled people, perplexed people, people who are troubled on every side and cast down often by the difficulties of the way, ever go out of themselves and their circumstances to this great God? Yes, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they can. Says the Apostle "That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us". And sometimes such a power comes upon the heart of a poor, troubled sinner, he says "I am not in despair; I am perplexed and cast down, but not destroyed. And then what? Why he says "I bear about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in my mortal body", and that life is faith, the power of God in your heart, lifting you up from self and circumstances and

guilt and trouble and temptation, to your true object and end, God in Christ. "O God of my salvation". And this salvation is so complete, it means that the sinner shall be saved to the uttermost; shall be saved from all his sins, and shall be saved into heaven. Shall be saved into the likeness of God's dear Son, and satisfaction will not be till then. And therefore, there will be a continual seeking of the Lord necessary to us. For the most part the people of God in this life are seeking people. True, they get moments of satisfaction; true, they get little resting places; true, there are times when the Lord comes and makes a little heaven below in their hearts and it is a blessing to know that, a great blessing. If there is a place in this earth that was like a little heaven to you because the Lord came to you as He came to Jacob, you are a peculiarly favoured person. O said Jacob "God is in this place and I knew it not. This is the house of God and the gate of heaven." Yes, but he is in heaven now; it was but the gate of heaven and he had to pass through much trouble before he entered heaven and so do the people of God. But God does not change; heaven does not change; the fulness and blessedness and glory and purpose and love and will of God do not change, and He is the God of our salvation to whom we address our prayers, whom, when we perceive Him, and He manifests Himself to us, we worship. If you know Him as the God of your salvation you will worship Him; you will worship the eternal Three as manifested in the incarnate Son, and it means this my friends, among other things, it means that this God of salvation, in His eternal Trinity, has settled and secured to His dear people, everything that will make them entirely, perfectly, completely and eternally blessed, so that they cannot be more blessed than He has designed and purposed to make them, and that is the prospect when you perceive God to be the God of your salvation. O you may say, I do not know much yet about salvation. I hope the Lord has called me by His grace; I trust He has given me a promise; I hope He has given me a sense, a little sense in my heart of His favour, but I do not know much of Him or His great salvation yet. No, you may make that acknowledgement sadly and truly, but if you know anything of it it is a great mercy. O it is a great thing to know anything of

God in Christ. There is much more to be known, it may be even here, and certainly hereafter; knowledge will be complete then. Here we know in part; the mystery of the Trinity we know in part. Blessed be God if we do know it in part. It is a doctrine that communicates to the soul great strength, and it enlarges the soul and enriches the soul to perceive that God - Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are all concerned in salvation; are the God of salvation. The Father loves the Son, and He loves His people in Him with an everlasting love, and so the great centre and object of faith is the Lord Jesus, for in Him it has pleased the Father that all fulness of grace should dwell. And He Himself said, when He came to the earth - "I come to do Thy will O My God". O what a salvation that is; a salvation accomplished for the church by the Son of God incarnate, for salvation includes redemption; it includes the washing away of sin, the removal of all that which was against the church, by the Lord Jesus on His cross. And so this God of salvation is attractive, and when He is known as the God of salvation the poor sinner loves Him, cannot help it. If you know God as the God of your salvation, as having, from eternity, had a purpose of love toward you, and having manifested that purpose of love in the gift of His dear Son, who died for you and bore your sins in His own body on the tree, and that that same Lord Jesus, who was crucified is now made Lord and Christ in heaven and in your heart, and if you have in your heart at times a sweet hope and anticipation of being with Him and like Him, and seeing that same dear Man who died on Calvary, the God Man with your eyes, and being with Him eternally and entirely conformed to His glorified image, O then you cannot but hope, you cannot but rejoice, and you cannot but love Him. The God of my salvation.

And this salvation includes salvation from death. We are dying people and soon it will matter very little as to what our circumstances in this life were; as to what, comparatively, it will matter but very little, as to what our positions in life were, but it will matter very very much indeed whether God is the God of our salvation. It will matter everything, because when death overtakes a man who is without God, he will then be bereaved of all his false hopes. O sinner, living without God in

the world, whatever false hopes prop you up now, they will fail you in death; however you may be blinded now by the god of this world, so that the gospel is nothing to you, then you will open your eyes in eternity to see the truth, not for your salvation, but for your eternal deprivation. But O, poor, seeking soul in bondage often through the fear of death and what death will reveal; made tender in your conscience and in the fear of God; convinced of your sinnership, feeling unworthy of the notice of the great and blessed God; longing for Him to come to you; this God saves from sin and death and hell. He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Now this is the thing for you to seek, to know this God for yourselves as the God of your salvation. May the Lord save you from resting short of that. Living, dying, without it, every soul must be lost. But if, seeking Him, you find Him, then you will know a little of what He is as the God of salvation and you will get liberty and peace; peace with respect to death, and you will be enabled to look beyond death with hope and a bright prospect and anticipation of a consummation of all your desires. Salvation complete will be known the other side of the grave. He will be the God of salvation then in the fulness of it. And He has said - O the report, the living word has come from heaven to some of our hearts - "Because I live, ye shall live also." Seek Him poor sinner and however much you may be withstood in seeking Him may you be enabled to seek Him to your dying day and then you will enter into His eternal presence.

AMEN.