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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 20 May 1928

PSALM 43 VERSE 3

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth
let them lead me, let them bring me unto Thy holy
hill and to Thy Tabernacles"

True religion is a personal work in the soul. Salvation consists in a work of God done for men and a work of God done in men. The two can never be separated. They are distinguishable, but they are not to be separated. They must be brought together in the experience of the sinner for his comfort, and it is the work of the divine Spirit to bring together in a sinner's heart the work of Christ without him, and his needs and his condition within him, so as that his desires shall be satisfied, his soul saved and all his troubles removed; his death swallowed up. It is a great work; none but God can perform it, as every one who attempts the work himself will prove. If you take up with religion and attempt to make yourself a christian, you will find that it is but vanity and vexation of spirit. You will find that you will work and labour in the very fires, and then, if God has mercy on you and shows you that all your religion and all your works, your good works and your religious works, are nothing but sin, and enables you, as a sinner to flee to the only refuge for sinners, a revealed Jesus Christ, you will have religion enough. You will have eternal life, and your souls will be satisfied. It is God the Spirit's work to make people hungry and thirsty for Himself. No natural man can honestly adopt the language of the Psalmist in these Psalms "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". There may be some here whose consciences are not utterly hardened in religion and who, being made honest, even naturally, would say - "I do not pant for God. I have never felt any dissatisfaction with myself, never felt my need of mercy. Well if you live and die like that you will be in a terrible state; your soul will be eternally dissatisfied, empty, void, and, worse, you will be

under the curse. God's mercy to His people is to create within them a hunger and thirst for Himself. This is the work of the Holy Ghost and it always leads the person, in whom the work is wrought, to go out of himself. Men may talk about the work of Christ; they may have a clear knowledge, in their judgment, of the gospel, and they may, in effect, say we want no work within, 'tis all in Christ our Head. 'Tis very solemn to be left to it, and I am fearful that there are not a few people in a religious profession today whose religion is of that type. If there is no work within, it is a proof there is no work without in which we have an interest. The work of Christ is a completed work and finished for His dear people, and every one of them for whom He wrought the mighty wonder of redemption shall come to know what redemption means. Do you know what redemption means? Do you know what it is to be far off from God, to have a guilty distance from Him, to feel that your soul is cut off from goodness, from blessedness, from satisfaction, from life, because of your sins? O my friends we shall never thank the Holy Spirit sufficiently for His great work in convincing of our sins, in showing us our need of a refuge, and in giving us in some measure, only a small measure in our cases, in some measure, to realise that God alone, the God of spirits alone, can fill up the vast desires of our souls, and that He can. He is the ever blessed God; a terror in His holy justice and in His law, to sinners, and yet He is made known in the gospel by the light of the Spirit as the blessed God, whose favour is better than life, whose presence is salvation, whose communion is satisfaction to the soul. And therefore it is a great trouble, a pain, a grief, a shame, to every person who, being born again by the Spirit and having given to him some apprehension of the blessedness of God, finds himself at a distance from Him, finds nothing going on in a way of communion with God, finds distance of guilt, finds himself far off, finds himself dark, weak, guilty, impoverished. It is a trouble to such a person; not to a dead person. I believe that however low we may get in our spiritual life, more or less, if we have life at all, there will be a restlessness, a trouble, a sense of need, when we are far off from God, when there is nothing going on between our souls and God. Is there nothing going on

between your soul and God, no matters in hand; matters relating to your eternal destiny; matters relating to your life, to your heart, to your will, to your affections, and to the purposes of God? It is very solemn. The Scriptures speak of it. It may be solemn to some of us, and is solemn to some of us, to consider and examine ourselves in the light of that word "having a name that thou livest and art dead". A man who has a name to live may hold his head up very high in a profession. Many of the children of God, truly living children of God, are often ashamed to hold up their heads before the people of God, and are ashamed to look up to heaven in secret, but they do smite upon their breasts, and they do say sometimes, out of a pained conscience and an honest heart - "God be merciful to me a sinner."

If we learn in our own experience what it is to need a refuge, and what it is to flee to Christ to hide us in our need of a refuge, we shall have in our experience sooner or later all the blessedness we are capable of knowing, for all is in Christ. All need is in us; all death attaches to us, and all the powers of hell are against us, if we are fleeing to the Lord, and everything is in Him - all safety, all life, all holiness, all satisfying love, and communion, so that the work of the Spirit always culminates in the sinner in a going out of himself to the Lord. "Out of self to Jesus lead" says one in a hymn, and this is what we want, what we need the Holy Spirit to do for us. The Psalmist in this Psalm was actively employed in this going out of self; not easy self, not comfortable self, not in a condition as one would speak of religious prosperity yet true prosperity, not in a comfortable feeling, but he was troubled, scorned. They said to him continually (it was like a killing in his bones, because he needed Him) "Where is thy God"? If you so believe in God as to need Him; if you so believe that God is a living God and a refuge for sinners and the Saviour of sinners, and if you believe that His favour is better than^a life, and don't feel that favour, and need Him in some particular circumstances, then it will be a killing in your bones as the enemy shall mock you and say - "Where is thy God?" You talk about Him; you pretend to pray to Him; you say you believe in Him; but where is He? Why

are you in this case? Why so dark? Why so far off? Why so weak, so troubled, so ignorant? Where is He? Do you know that killing? Is God so real to you as that the mockery of Satan is a pain and a killing in you? It would not be to a carnal professor. God - he has Him in the Bible. God - he is full of His Name, in his lips; he makes a great profession. Look at that man in secret. Do you see a tear in his spirit over sin? Do you find that person smiting on his breast? Rather you would find him probably pleased with himself, satisfied with his working knowledge of the Bible. No contrition of heart, no repentance for sin, but just a dead professor. See another poor sinner, no better than the other but under the divine tuition of the Spirit; what does he do in secret? Seeks after God. His knowledge of the Scriptures even is not his salvation, his God. It is God he wants, God's power, God's presence, God's demonstration, God's love, God's deliverance, God's pardon, God's help, God's salvation. O it is a great thing to want God and not to rest in religion without Him. I am sure of this, that if the Holy Spirit did not make us feel our need we should soon rest without the Lord. It is no thanks to you and to me if we cannot rest without Him. It is the work of the Holy Ghost. Thank Him if you can find it in your hearts, those of you, even comfortless now, thank Him if you can honestly say - "The God of spirits only can fill up the vast desires of my soul". If you can honestly say "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". And so in the words I have read as a text, the Psalmist cries out to the Lord, goes out of himself in his present necessity. He has a belief in God and wants that blessed God to do something for him, to come, as it were to him, to show him Himself, to demonstrate to him and in him His gracious power, to attend to his case, and relieve him in his necessity.

" O send out Thy light and Thy truth." " God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Says John - "If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we do lie and do not the truth." Now if you at the present time are in darkness, you must say that at present you do not enjoy that fellowship, and

that is deprivation to a Christian. Fellowship, communion with God, is the satisfaction and the only satisfaction of his soul. Some of you may say - well then we get very little satisfaction. Well, better is a little that the righteous hath than the pretended riches of many a wicked professor. If you have a little communion with God at any time in your life you are favoured, greatly favoured people and I would count myself favoured to have had, and to have, at any time, any true communion with God. And then when we are in darkness it is a mercy not to be in despair. It is a mercy to be enabled, in darkness, to believe, and yet not to believe in that natural way, so as to be unexercised concerning the darkness. Many people's faith is of that kind, that dead faith, which prevents them troubling when they are in darkness. They have never known the light, or if they have, then at the time in which they are unexercised, they are in a sad and evil state, a deathly state, a state of great declension. And if you have got into that state, any of you, and the Lord stirs you up, then you will feel the darkness, and you will be pained and ashamed and scorned by the devil, and it will be your mercy then, and you will feel it, not to be in despair.

I believe that true faith never entirely gives up the ghost. It may get very low; you may feel sometimes so much infidelity and feel so the entrance of the devil's suggestions against God in you, as to be almost fearful that you are an infidel, but true faith will rise again.

Though bleak winds the boughs deface
The rooted stock shall still remain
Leaves may languish, fruit decrease
But more shall grow again,

and the growth begins in prayer. The growth begins in a going out to God, not in saying my case is better than I thought it was; not in saying "O if God did something for me I would trust in that", but a going out to God - O that He would come to me, that He would again let me know His power, that I might have a

fresh testimony from heaven, the light of life shining into my heart. "O send out Thy light". We need it; we need it. The light of nature, the light of reason, the light of learning are not sufficient for a living child of God. Only heavenly light. It comes only from God. Many lo's here and lo's there you will find, much natural light you will find in religion, and we do find it, but there is no light that has life in it, but the light that comes down from God into the heart and therefore a child of God has nothing to do but to cry for it. When he is in darkness he cannot see without it, he cannot, as he feels, go on without it, yet he cannot create it and so, through the mercy of God, he is enabled to cry for it.

Do you believe in the light of God? Do you know it? Do you want it? We need light in many particulars; we need light into our case, to know where we are. It is not wise to trust your feelings; it is not wise to trust your heart; it is not wise to trust any of your friends. If you trust any of these things you will soon be very wrong and only God can show us where we are, and sometimes so much darkness with confusion prevails that this is a very serious matter. Lord where am I? What am I? Strange myself and paths appear. Am I, can I possibly be, a christian? Is it possible I am a child of God? Could such horrid things live in me? Could I be the subject of such fears, such temptations, such thoughts, if I were a child of God? Is all a delusion? Was the beginning right? Where am I? Where did I go astray? Lord let Thy light shine. It is no small mercy to know where you are. God's light alone can infallibly show you. Ah, and if He shows you, shining into your soul, two particular things in this matter, it will be solemn, but yet very salutary and encouraging. If He shows, first of all, when His light shines, that you are a child of grace; if in answer to your cries He shines upon His first work, and then shows to you where you went astray, where you forsook Him, how you began to decline, where you turned in your spirit from the way of understanding and now feel almost as if you are in the congregation of the dead, it is no small mercy. O my friends, though it may be a pain to you to see how unfaithful you have been, how treacherous you have been, how you

have clamoured after an easy by-path, Yet when the Lord shows a sinner this it is a great mercy, because when He shows a sinner himself in that light, it is life. It says to a sinner - "God has not utterly forgotten you". It says to him - "He testifies of the beginning". O it is a great thing, with all the shame it brings, to have the Lord testifying again of the beginning and it also gives you in your heart a direction, as if it should say - Now turn to Him from whom you have revolted". "Go to Him who has condescended to show you where you have declined and ask Him for restoring mercy". "Send out Thy light." Better to be shown our case in the light of God than to have false comforts lifting us up, and ourselves bearing witness with ourselves that we are alright. This is what I believe the Psalmist intended when in the 139 Psalm (and he knew God's holiness; it was no light thing with him so to pray, nor will it be with you if you so pray) he said "Search me O God", in my heart. Do not let me be deceived. "Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Were you ever made so in earnest and so fearful of your own deceitful hearts, and so believing that God could show you where you were wrong, and yet would not curse you because you were wrong, as to pray like that to Him? That is faith; that is an honest conscience; that is the work of the Holy Ghost. "O send out Thy light".

We need light in our souls to show us God again and again, because we can only know Him by His own light. We can only know ourselves truly by the light of God, and it is a great thing to have some fresh light shining into your soul, giving you some knowledge of God. For instance, look at this - the light of God's holiness in the gospel. You may have seen it, you may have seen the glory of it. The people of God do, by the mercy of God, see the glory of the holiness of the gospel, but O you will find it no little mercy to get a fresh shining forth of that glorious light. God is holy in His gospel. Good news is not news of any degeneracy in the holiness of God. Good news is not the news of a God who winks at sin. The gospel is holy, and a sinner, afresh invaded with sin, and again turning to the Lord in prayer, finds it a great mercy to really, soberly, and solemnly, in the light

of God, look at this great point. The Holy Spirit does give to a poor sinner sometimes in a fresh light to see and believe in the holiness of God in the gospel in forgiving sin and transgression and delighting in mercy and yet doing it all consistent with His holy character as a pure and holy God. This brings in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. All the glory that sinful men, that the people of God made saints, shall ever see, is in the face of Jesus Christ. It means that the Lord shines on the work of Christ in the heart, as distinct from a natural grasp of the gospel by reason. You will know the difference if the Lord teaches you. You will know the difference between a mere idea of gospel truth and the shining and living light of the Spirit upon that truth in your heart. The Apostle made much of this in the Corinthians. O it is a great thing to know anything of it at all. He said - "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" that is in creation, "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The glory of His justice, of His holiness; the glory of His blessed will; the glory of His mercy; the glory of His love; the glory of His pardon and of His salvation. The glory of His character as a just God; the glory of His manifestation as the Saviour of sinners. "O send out Thy light".

Now poor sinner, you who are saying this - "O that I could see that glory; O that it would shine into my heart", there is one negative encouragement, let me bring it to you, and it is this - If you are after that light, and asking the Lord to shine it into your heart, then that Scripture, that awful Scripture is not true at present respecting you, where it is said, that the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. Why, you are after it, you want it. You may fear because you are in darkness, that that is true, but what do you say in secret? Do you say to Him - "Lord shine; Lord reveal Thyself; Lord come and show me mercy; bless me with a knowledge of Thyself as My Saviour, as Thou doest, Thyne own people. Let me not be left out Lord. Well that may be an encouragement to you that

you are not left under the power of the god of this world while you ask the Lord to shine on you. And in one word, it is this that the sinner wants - he wants the light that shines from the sacred mystery of the cross of Christ. There is a light, a glory, that shines from thence. O it is a profound mystery this. We may look on it in an external way as all professed Christians do, but there is no light in that. It is the shining of it forth in the Spirit's power upon the soul, into the heart, that does the sinner good. That brings life with it; that solemnises the mind; that creates a living hope; that causes the poor sinner who sees it to really entertain a solid hope that his salvation is just, and it creates love. It gives contrition; it causes a sinner, enables him, as never otherwise he could have done, to really hate sin because sin is sin. Some of us know a good deal of what it is to hate sin because we love ourselves, not to hate it because it is sin. We are sorry we are sinners; we desire to eschew sin because we know that punishment is due to sin, but that is consistent with a dead soul, and some of us may sometimes solemnly examine ourselves on this point as to whether we have ever truly, spiritually, purely, hated sin and mourned over it. We may weep over ourselves in self-pity; we may dread the punishment of it and yet never know what sin is, and never mourn over it on account of what it is, but if there is ever given to you and to me a view, spiritual view, by the light of God of the cross of Christ, then in our very hearts we shall see what sin is and hate it. The sin of man that brought the Prince of Life to death; the sin of man that would for ever be on a sinner in the curse of God, borne by the Son of God incarnate in that curse. It is a mystery; it is a power. A living light shining into the heart upon it brings into that heart power. It has this effect - it sanctifies. The light of the cross sanctifies a person, separates him from sin and from the world. It crucifies him. Said the Apostle - O I have looked at that word many a time and coveted to know fully what it means - "By whom," (that is by the cross of Christ) "I am crucified to the world and the world to me". The great trouble of most professors is to find out by careful search how nearly they can walk to the world and be safe for eternity. The great trouble of a true Christian, in whose

heart the light of Christ's cross shines, is that he is so mixed, and so unsanctified, and so unseparated from an ungodly world, and from his sinful self, and yet it is the cross of Christ in the power of it that is a sanctifying power in the heart.

"O send out Thy light". And it gives the sinner to know something. The light and the truth come together. It is the light of the knowledge of God; the knowledge of God in the truth of His gospel; the knowledge of God in the truth of His Son; and this in particulars. We need Him to reveal to us the infinite merit of the Person of Christ, so that we may know the infinite merit of His blood. Argument wont do it, natural argument. We cannot by argument conceive infinity. But a touch from Him upon the soul can make you believe that the Son of God, the crucified Man, the sin atoning Saviour, is God in His very person, the Son of God, and therefore infinite in His merit. "Send out Thy light". Lord, give me, by a spiritual faith to grasp that sacred truth of the infinite merit of Thy blood and with this light and this truth there is the efficacy. You may see the thing sometimes so as to believe it, but then you will want further, the truth of it in your experience. You will want not only to see, but to know in the truth of it, that that blood can cleanse you from all sin. 'Tis a great thing to believe it can. It is a greater thing, not different, but greater in the measure of the truth of it, to know that it can, by feeling the power of it in your heart. "O send out Thy light". Let me afresh, with vital faith, believe in the atonement, and let me afresh, in the power of the Spirit, know the truth of the atonement in the peace of my conscience, in the cleansing of it from all guilt. Therefore a sinner, a child of God cannot bring God anything. He does not bring God anything. He is bound to come as a bankrupt; he is glad of the terms. You cannot find better terms than the gospel reveals, and he is glad when the Spirit shows him these terms. Oh when sometimes you and I have been looking at ourselves and been full of misery and have said in our hearts, we shall never have comfort, we shall never know peace, we shall go sorrowing all our days if we get to heaven at last, and we have been ready almost to steel ourselves against

the inevitable in this matter, and then the Holy Spirit has graciously shown to us what we knew, but we wanted fresh light on, that great truth, truth so often repeated (would that it were known more) that great truth in John's Epistle - "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". And then when you get that, when you get that in your spirit afresh, then you will give God something - you will thank Him, you will praise Him, and you will worship Him. You only give God what He gives you. It is a great thing to be needy; it is a great thing to believe in a full God; it is a great thing to know anything of what it is for Him to communicate light and truth to the soul.

Then we need the Lord also to show to us, afresh to show to us the covenant of His grace and our interest in it. Circumstances of time, changing scenes, many desolations and trials come upon us in this life, and that word of the Apostle in I Corinthians 15 may assume an increased importance and meaning as we go on in life - "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable". There is no misery like the misery of a child of God has in his trouble for sin. There is no wretchedness like the wretchedness that a Christian has when he sees that he cannot do what he would because he is a sinner; cannot serve God purely; cannot live without sin mixing with what he does. There is no wretchedness like that and yet the little bits of comfort that the child of God has here is a sweetness that more than overpays all his wretchedness. But then we want this light to give us a little fresh earnest of the covenant inheritance. We want the Spirit to show us what are the riches of the glory of that inheritance of God in the saints; that we may know why He has called us and what He has called us to; that we may have in our souls foretastes and confirmations of what is laid up for us when we have done with this mortal life. O send it out Lord. Send it out that by it I may be quickened in my race, that I may be led more resolutely and singly to set my affections on things above. Send it out. All of it must come from heaven. Every motion Godward must come from heaven, and the motion of faith in prayer out of a destitute soul comes from heaven, and will go back to heaven, and bring the

blessing down. God wont reject such a prayer as this.

"Let them lead me". Light and truth to lead. Light to show the path you ought to take, to conduct you in the way everlasting. Truth to give you in your soul a solid ground to go upon. It is very sad to walk on in a profession of religion by guess work, by hearsay. Truth is the truth laid in the heart. Truth sent out by God is truth received by a sinner as it is said - The Lord God sent His word and it lighted upon Jacob - and when the Lord sends a word into your heart then you receive something; you receive truth. Truth is a substance to you, as and when it is sent from God into your heart. I mentioned just now, you will remember in prayer, that great and blessed truth - O, and if it is brought into your heart, I know it will fill you with joy; I know it will give you strength in your troubles; I know it will give you power to confide in God and look for His mercy to the end - "Because I live ye shall live also". Why, when that comes out from God into a sinner, the Lord comes with it. He is not very far from a man to whom He speaks that word. Because I live after the power of an endless life as your High Priest, your Saviour, your mighty King, conqueror of sin, death and hell for you, your Intercessor and Advocate with the Father; because I live in this capacity, because I, who once was dead, live and live for evermore, you, a poor, struggling sinner, with much death in you and about you, you shall live for this reason. What reason; did that truth ever come from heaven into your heart and make a living Christ a living reality to you, and draw your heart's confidence out to Him and give you strength again patiently to run your race?

O send it out Lord. And when He sends it out He opens the heart to receive it. You may look on the gospel as I have often done, read it until I have been literally, physically weary and my heart has been like ice, hard and closed to it. Ah then you will have some business; then you will have some business with God and with Satan. O could a person read the Scriptures without a feeling heart, read each moving line and never be moved by it and understand painfully what the hymnwriter says

Of feeling all things show some sign
But this unfeeling heart of mine

And then perhaps you put the Book down and mourn before God and the power comes on you and you ask the Lord to forgive you your hardness and the sin that has hardened your heart, and a word is brought to your conscience with such sweet power, such a kind word from God, such a testimony from heaven, and the words that you have read, many of them come into your heart with power and you know the truth of them. You believe what God says because He puts the word into your heart. He puts in His hand by the hole of the door and you receive Him. You receive Him in His Word; you receive Him in His testimony; you believe what He says because of the power and the authority of His own Word.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me." Do not let me be led by the light of my reason. Did you ever feel afraid of your strength, afraid of your knowledge - not much to boast of - but afraid of what you have, afraid of your religious knowledge, afraid even of your natural knowledge of the gospel, lest you should pervert your way by it? And having entertained these fears perhaps you find on the other side, the Lord break your understanding; the Lord make you a fool, so that you feel you have not the understanding of a man in the things of God. Then you feel ready to halt; then you feel you need a teacher. But it is a mercy to be cleared out sometimes like that. It is a mercy to lose your knowledge; it is a mercy not to be left to go on in carnal ways in religion, but to be dependent for every step of leading upon the light and truth of God sent out. I would not depreciate, by anything I say, a natural knowledge of the Scriptures. Would that England was full of the knowledge of the Bible. If it were so, if even teachers of religion and professors of religion had their memories and minds and consciences stored with the Scriptures and regulated their worship and their lives thereby, England would be a different country from what it is today, but that may very well be without salvation. I speak now of the things that pertain to salvation, things that are vital and, that will bring you to heaven. We must have something from

God sent to us, and if you have one word from God sent to you, you will want another. That word that God has spoken to you, you will depend on. It will help many a heavy hour that you will get, but you will want another word. The Word of God is the bread of life to a sinner when that word is brought by power into his heart.

Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me; let Thy light guide me and Thy truth bring me. Light shows the way; truth gives life and strength to come that way; it gives a solid ground to stand on in the supernatural way, the way of a true pilgrim. You do not tread on fancy when you step on the truth; not tread it under foot, but walk on it as a foundation in the way to heaven. This is the way we must take and therefore we do not make haste. He that believeth shall not make haste in religion. O but, say you, I feel so stunned; I ought to be further on the way. Well, the Lord can bring you on a long way in a short time, but if you get on as you think in your own strength and by your own effort, you may find you have gone a long way astray. The mercy is to wait on God and the blessing is when God looks upon His waiting people and makes them know and feel they shall not be ashamed that wait for Him. May the Lord forgive what has been amiss. May this light and this truth be sent out to us to lead us and bring us even to His holy hill.

AMEN.