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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 20 July 1924

PSALM 63 v 1 and 2

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek
Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh
longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where
no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as
I have seen Thee in the sanctuary"

This is an expression, wonderful to a mortal man, of his faith. It is indeed a miracle for a born infidel, an atheist, an unbeliever, to say to God: "O God, Thou art my God". The language of human nature in its best form, unregenerate, is - we desire not the knowledge of His ways. Who is the Lord? The language of faith in the heart of every quickened child of God is, O that the Lord were mine, that God were my God. If it is true that God is our God, it is because He has made Himself our God. We make a god by nature of anything and everything with which we have to do, which we possess, or desire to possess, but God is determined that He will be the God of His people. "I will be their God", and so He makes them find in experience how unsatisfactory, how passing, every other thing is which their affections run after. God is invisible, God is a Spirit, and there is nothing in our nature that can really truly know Him apart from that principle that He Himself implants when He gives eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." God is holy, God is very terrible in His justice, but God is good and the source of goodness. It is He that holdeth the soul in life. It is He that gives all goodness and every perfect gift. It is He that sustains the soul, that blesses people who are blessed. O God is good, a stronghold to them that trust in Him, but He is not tangible to us, and with respect to His justice, and with respect to His holy claims we, as viewing Him in His justice, and in His claims, can never desire Him. He claims what we cannot give Him. He sees all our evils, all the wickedness of our hearts, and He sees every thought that is against Him, thoughts against His law, and yet He makes Himself, notwithstanding all this,

He makes Himself so attractive to some people that the greatest desire of their hearts is to be able to say unwaveringly, with a consciousness of the Holy Spirit's witness, that this God is their God. I do not doubt but that there are some here who, if they could in their very inmost souls rest in the testimony of the Holy Ghost to this, so as to be able to claim God as their God, to assert before Him that He is their God, would indeed be satisfied. But will He be? that is the question. Will He condescend to be?

Now in this, His mighty work of getting the hearts of men, He does do two things in His people. I have hinted at one thing, and that is He does make every other object comparatively undesirable; that all objects but His in them are unsatisfying to the soul. And next He does this, He makes Himself so attractive, so approachable, so gracious, that the soul cannot help seeking Him. And how, and in what way, does He so make Himself attractive? Not by altering Himself, not by becoming less just, or less holy, or less forbidding in His holy law when He says "Depart from Me ye cursed". How then does He? He makes Himself attractive in and through the Person of Emmanuel, reveals Himself there, shines forth from His darkness, the darkness of His eternal holiness, and justice, as the Sun of Righteousness, upon a poor, chilled, dying, perishing world; upon a poor, dark, benighted, cold, longing sinner. There are men who are brought a little to understand what it is to believe in God by Jesus Christ, as Peter speaks. "Who by Him" - that is the Lord Jesus - "do believe in God that raised Him from the dead". And O the compassion, the kindness of God in this, that He should so grant a manifestation of Himself. "The word of faith which we preach" that is near, even in the heart (Romans 10 v 8). God is not accessible in His law. God is but a consuming fire out of Christ, and far off are we from Him by wicked works, but in His Son He is near to those who, by the teaching of the Spirit, have their hearts broken for sin and long for this holy God to be their God. It is a great thing to have your heart set upon finding God. All flesh shall come before Him, every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess unto Him, but what a mercy it is to be at this business in this mortal life. Where the tree falls it must lie. Living and dying nothing but idolators, without God in the world, there can be no faith, there can be no conversion, there can be no preparation for eternity. O but God makes Himself God to His

people, and He causes them to seek Him early. "Early will I seek Thee". This was a determination in the heart of David when he was in the wilderness, and when God puts His people into the wilderness - not by moving them about, but by making the world and its best things a wilderness to them, for the world is that to every Christian who has not a present sense of the Lord's presence in his things - then the language is - "Early will I seek Thee." Sometimes men are, in their early life, made to seek God, and what a mercy that is, when God comes into the life in early years; when He comes and convinces a person in tender years of their need of God and His mercy; that He makes Himself real. It is a great mercy I think, this, for one to be enabled, to be compelled to seek God early.

"Early will I seek Thee". This expresses the earnestness of the soul in seeking God. It is as though the soul says, I will seek God before all else. Other things come in and divert the attention, but when God, here and there, in this thing and that thing, makes the thing which we would attend to a wilderness, then makes Himself necessary, and attractive, and most desirable to us, we say "Early will I seek Thee". It would be a mercy for us if this were the disposition of each of our hearts now, if we were kept at this early seeking the Lord, and I would here hint at a practical thing in religion, namely how profitable it is for one who has faith, and the Spirit, to early seek the Lord, even literally, early in the morning. That is not an unimportant Scripture, and may have a very close bearing upon our lives, where the Lord said: "..... rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Luke 22 v 46) You may think this is legal and formal, but I think there is such a thing as faith and a tender conscience, that there is such a thing as such a wilderness in everything here, and such an attraction in God, as does sometimes bring men to this, to seek Him early. And O, if we never seek God, and if we never find God, how unutterably poor, and miserable, and blind, and wretched, and lost, we are. Why, if you have never found God, if you have never come to God, if you have never found access to God, you have never seen, you have never come to, glory; never seen the fountain of grace. You have never come to the source of goodness, you have never found a place of safety. It is a great thing that God will be sought, that He will condescend to allow, that He will graciously cause, men to seek unto Him. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth

and causeth to approach unto Thee."

"Early will I seek Thee". He is the home of every new-born soul, the only resting place that a living soul can rest in. There is restlessness out of God. There is darkness, there is insecurity, there is sin, and guilt, and temptation, and fear, and ruin, ruin feared, out of God. In Him, with Him, there is strength, and peace, and comfort, and holy confidence, and hope, lively hope. There is love, mutual love, there is peace, peace in the conscience. If God is not in your things, if He is not in your providences, if He is not in your souls, if He is not in your religion, if He is not in your life, not in your death, O what poor people you are. And so, He being so rich, and so needful, and everything else so unsatisfactory, so unsatisfying without Him, the soul says with David: "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Every place is dry; there is no water can be found from any earthly spring. No life, no refreshment, no love, no peace, nothing to satiate the soul, nothing but a perishing condition in this wilderness. There is no ploughing, no sowing, no growth here. All must come down in the same way spiritually as the manna came down in the wilderness for Israel; and as the smitten rock that followed Israel, so must the water of life follow us through the wilderness, and so must we daily have manna from heaven. So there is a searching after it, a longing for it, a thirsting. I wonder how many of our souls here do say that we thirst for God. Thirst expresses an intense desire that, if not satisfied, there must soon come death. O thirst, thirst naturally is painful, and a desire after earthly things may be expressed like a thirst. Some thirst for riches, some thirst for praise and honour among men, some thirst for religion, some thirst for possessions, and fame, some thirst for health and pleasure. But O, how unsatisfying are all these things, even though they may be attained, compared with God. But God, God in His grace, God in His mercy, God in His power to save, God in His love manifested in Christ, He is satisfying, and it is known that He is. Men do taste that He is gracious. This thirst comes from the Holy Spirit's work in the soul, making God appear what He is, and it also comes from an experience of what He is as having been tasted. If sin and guilt are like a burning, raging fever in your conscience, then you will be glad when that blessed message of pardon through Jesus

Christ comes to you. It is expressed in the Proverbs thus - "As good news from a far country, so is cold water to a thirsty soul", and this good news is that which the Holy Ghost brings into the conscience of one where the feverishness of sin is, where the incurable disease is, that there is mercy, there is pardon, there is salvation in God; that there is One who by Himself, in His Own body on the tree, bore sin away, and that that Person now reigns on the Mercy Seat in heaven, and that He is there to receive sinners, and bless them with the fruits of His death. Now when that good news comes to a sinner it is like cold water to a thirsty soul, and if you have heard that good news in your heart, then you will find your thirst increased for a taste of that pardon, for a touch of that virtue, that is in the blood of Christ. O what a mercy it is to have that experience here rather than have the experience of the rich man in hell, who, there in torments, lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus, the poor beggar, in Abraham's bosom, and asked that he might be sent with a drop of cold water to put on his tongue. My friends, you who thirst for God, and cannot be satisfied without His mercy, you have great cause to take courage and wait on Him and seek Him early. Jacob, when he had a particular thirst, a particular desire, a particular necessity, said to the Lord: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." There is every encouragement in this great God to seeking souls to seek on, for it is written: "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." If you are waiting for His pardon, if you are searching for Him as for hid treasure, though you fear you will never find Him to your satisfaction, may the Lord give you the encouragement of that word: They shall never be ashamed. You are ashamed perhaps sometimes because you have been waiting so long. Well, it is a mercy that you have been kept waiting. It will be a greater mercy, to your comfort, when you find and taste the grace of Christ. But still it is a mercy to be kept waiting, a mercy to have your face Zionward, even though you may be at present parched with thirst, hungering for God, thirsting for Christ. You will never starve for want of Him if He has made Himself so necessary to you. But we do not only taste that the Lord is gracious once, and, getting satisfaction, want Him no more. We want Him constantly. And therefore, it is more or less, from the time the thirst is given to the time it shall be taken away in heaven, a case of thirsting for the Lord. Thirsting and tasting, and thirsting still more to know more, to feel more, of the Lord and His

grace.

The particular matter that was before David is expressed here. He thirsted and sought after God, his God, to see His power and His glory. "To see Thy power and Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary". God is invisible; we cannot see Him by any natural means, and yet He is seen. This expression, to see the power and glory of God, expresses to us a true apprehension of God as He manifests Himself in His power and in His glory to sinners. We must have eyes to see this. We must have hearts to observe Him in His power, and glory, and we must have light for this, and all this is the gift of God. He had seen in the sanctuary the power and glory of God. He said in one Psalm: "Twice have I heard this that power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62 v 11). Power - power does belong to Him. Have you seen that power, that glorious power of God? It is not a mental idea of the power and glory of some supreme Being that is intended. It is not a vision, but it is a spiritual apprehension of this power and glory of God by faith, as the power and glory is revealed by the Holy Ghost. It is felt, it is known. The power of God is very real, spiritual, supernatural. His power is seen, it is felt, it is apprehended in the sanctuary. What are we to understand by this? First, we must say His power and glory is seen in Christ. He is God's Sanctuary. He is that little Sanctuary which God has promised to be to all His people, whithersoever they shall come (Ezekiel 11 v 16). And the power of God and the glory of God is seen there. The power of God - "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God", Paul says of Him. Power to save sinners is seen to be in Christ. "Mighty to save", it is written concerning Him. Yea, He Himself said "I that speak in righteousness" am He, with My garments dyed in blood, "mighty to save". (Isaiah 63) and this is the power of God unto salvation. It is seen in the cross of Christ. Have you seen it? There is no salvation anywhere else. There is power somewhere else, O terrible power, almighty power to condemn, but in the cross of Christ there is the power of salvation. In His cross there was sin condemned in the flesh of Christ, the power of condemnation there, the power of divine love. O how that three-fold love of God in its mighty power was shown when Christ the mighty Saviour died. Power is seen too in the resurrection of Christ. He was raised from the dead by the power of God. All the church, in that day when Christ was raised from the dead, was

justified. In one day a whole nation was born. In the day when He died all the sins of the church were removed from her. In the day He rose she was justified. There is power in this, power actually in this resurrection, and it is seen by faith, and it was Paul's desire that the Ephesians should know this power; not only believe in it, but know it. The Psalmist had seen it. Now He thirsts to see this God and to see His power so as he had seen it in the sanctuary. O, it is a strengthening sight to see by faith a once crucified but now glorified Redeemer. To trace the mystery, to see the glory, of divine power in Him. We can hardly bear to think of divine power, only here. It would break us eternally. Upon whom this stone falls, said the Lord, he shall be ground to powder (Matthew 21 v 44) but he who falls upon this stone shall be broken. Ah and if you are broken like that, what a mercy it will be, because He bindeth up the broken. He has power to save.

This power is seen in the Scriptures, that is the sanctuary of God, a holy place. Did you never see the power and the glory of God in the holy Scripture, feel it, realise the life of it? There is power my friends in a promise. Tis God's power, it is seen, apprehended, felt. When the Lord speaks, when He causes a word to enter into the heart, when He enables the soul to trust in what He says, to look for the fulfilment of His promise; when He allays his fear by His promise, when He directs his feet by a word, then the power is known, and it is glorious power. O there is a glory in this power because it leads the soul up to its source. You will never find a gracious promise come with ever so little living power into your heart but it will lead you to Him from whom it comes, and that is glory, the glory of divine love, and compassion, and watchfulness, and the glory of wisdom in condescending to exercise power, life in the word in your heart, and to make that word suitable to your case, to let you hear the voice of God in the word. Have you seen this glory and this power in this sanctuary?

It is seen in the literal sanctuary. O how little of it is seen in these days. There is much preaching, many services - much good preaching is here by our Pastor - but how much of the power and glory of the Lord is seen? Some have seen it and felt it in the sanctuary, having been carried away in, and by, the power of that glory. The

Lord has been near to them; the power of His presence has been felt, His love has melted their hearts, and they have believed, and bowed their head and worshipped. Now if you have truly seen the Lord thus in the sanctuary, is there not sometimes a longing desire to see Him there again? O it is a solemn thing when this is withholden and when men go constantly with no glimpse of the King and His power, and His beauty in the sanctuary. The services without this, what are they? We would not despise a little help, we would not despise a little nourishment to faith now and again, but O those visits, when the soul is gathered up, away from all that is earthly; when the soul is fresh set to go to heaven, and made again fresh, a lively pilgrim; when Christ is very precious, and His people dear, and His praise delighted in. Do you thirst for this again, to see this, to feel it again? Or, if you have never had it, do you thirst for it? Do you long for it? Do you pray for it? Well, here is a man that did, the Psalmist. I would bless the Lord that some have seen Him here in somewhat of His power and felt it. Not that we have seen much or felt much, but it has been of that nature that sometimes in the remembrance of it, and in another fresh, little touch of it, makes us long to taste it again, to feel it, to see it again.

Then His power and His glory is seen in this, even in the quickening of souls into eternal life, and bringing them out of the prison. He has power to deliver, to liberate people, and make them show themselves. Tis part of His gracious work that He should say to the prisoners, go forth, and to those that are hidden, show yourselves. And is it not matter of thirst and longing desire sometimes in your hearts to put aside now for a moment your own cases, you who fear God, and desire to see His glory, to see this particular exercise of power, that there might be others gathered besides those that are gathered. God is greatly glorified in this even when men, being quickened into divine life and delivered from under the law, they are made to pay their vows, and be His witnesses in a public way. I believe that at times in the church the people of God have had it particularly laid on their hearts to long and thirst and pray for this manifestation of power and glory. "To see Thy power and Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary."

And then again there is one other sanctuary in which the Lord has

been seen by faith and that is in heaven. John saw Him there; he had a vision. We have not visions, but by faith, as he records his vision, there is an apprehension of a glorified Christ in heaven. He saw the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion with His company. They had come out of great tribulation, and they sang the song of Moses and the Lamb, and the elders threw their crowns at the feet of the King, the Lord Jesus. And he had a vision of the city, and it needed no light because the Lamb was the light and the glory of the city. And he saw the people that were there, that they thirsted no more, nor hungered any more, neither did the sun smite them with heat, and there was no night there. What makes heaven? Is it not the presence of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb? Have you not once or twice in your life by faith looked upon this, His power, His Kingly power, and His glory in heaven, and said out of your heart: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." There is nothing that can heal and cure a covetous spirit, that can heal a fainting heart, and encourage it; that can lengthen out patience in the poor, weary soul of a sinner, like a sight of that glory, that power. And is there not sometimes in this connection a thirst to get there to see it in such a manner and measure as it cannot be seen here? Now we know in part, now we see through a glass darkly, and O, though it would be very ungrateful of us to be unmindful of the Lord's goodness in giving us just now and again a glimpse of His glory by faith, yet what must it be to see Him as He is, and to be with Him, and to be like Him. He has power My friends to subdue all things unto Himself. That is seen by faith, but when will it be seen in the fullness of it? When "He shall" - as some of us hope that He shall - "change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." Still while we are here may He give to us some views of Himself in His glory, and come near to us, and let us feel His grace, and taste His love. A hope of entering into His presence, a hope of obtaining the victory, may trials well endure. My dear friends, may the Lord help you who are in conflict, who are thirsting for God, may He help you to seek Him constantly. He is worth our continual search. O, and if, now and again, He grants us a little resting place in some particular truth, in some gracious promise, may He help us to bless Him for it, but may He save us, save us from resting in anything short of a known union with Him. I believe that the thirst that Christ gives to His people

for Himself, however much satisfied - and O, there is satisfaction in the love and grace of Christ - will never be fully satisfied until it is taken away. "They shall thirst no more".

What of those who never know the thirst, who have no desire for God? Who think that they, because they have never committed any grievous sin, as they may say, therefore they hope it will be alright at the end, May the Lord be gracious to such and give them the pain of this thirst; make them realise how much they need God, and cause them so to seek Him as to find Him. May the Lord pardon what has been amiss. May He grant that we each, if it is His will, may feel this power, may see it and the glory that is in it. If the power of Christ is seen and felt in us, then we shall know what it is to be believers. We shall know what it is to obtain the victory. They obtained the victory through the blood of the Lamb, and that power whereby they obtained it was by the exercise of the Holy Spirit through faith in their hearts. O, a powerful God manifesting His power in poor, weak sinners is glorious. May the Lord grant that we may be the unworthy and happy subjects of that glorious power, for His Name's sake.

AMEN.