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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton, on Wednesday evening
28 July 1920

TEXT: PSALM 71 verse 15

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I
will make mention of Thy righteousness,
even of Thine only."

This is a gracious resolution come to by a child of God. It is the obedience of faith and it is the result of experience. David was an old man when he penned this Psalm and had had much experience of the Lord's dealings with him, and also much experience, sad experience, of his own frailty and sinful nature. He had not got through his troubles, though nearing the end of them, and in this Psalm he prays urgently for the Lord's sustenance. One would think, perhaps, looking at the matter naturally, that he had got past such a prayer, but these words came from his heart - "O God be not far from me. O my God make haste for my help." It is somewhat encouraging for some of us who feel weakness and trouble and many enemies, spiritual, powerful enemies, that one so valiant and so experienced as David could find in his heart such a prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost. It suits us at times much, and underlying this gracious resolve in the text, there is therefore first of all an experience, real experience of weakness in self. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." If he had had strength in himself, then this would have been but mockery, but, knowing that his enemies were too great for him, and that his weakness was such as would leave him liable to be overcome by them, and knowing, moreover, the strength of the Lord, he came, by the Spirit's gracious sustenance, to this resolution "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" And, sooner or later, every child of God comes to this resolution deliberately. There is not a child of God here, I am sure, but what has come to this resolve. Go, you must, go on pilgrimage. Every child of God must, being called to it by God Himself, and when the Lord's time comes, then the soul, in response to the Spirit's teaching, says - "I will go in the

strength of the Lord God." There is a will in this matter. We read a good deal in the scriptures about the will of man and of the will of God, and it is plain that the will of God is sovereign and supreme, and that all things are done according to the counsel of His will. But here is a man declaring his will. I will go. Notwithstanding, the scripture tells us, the Holy Ghost, by Paul, that it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy, yet, in every child of God called to go on pilgrimage, there is this will, a will, bent by God's secret, powerful dealings, to go on pilgrimage, to turn the back upon the city of destruction. A will to leave the vanities and the pleasurable sins and the pleasures of this life, to leave all for that one only better part, as the Lord Jesus said "But one thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." I will go after this. It is a blessed thing to be brought to this willingness, for it is a day of God's power. As it is written, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." O, the infinite mercy if this willingness has ever been found in our souls, in our hearts, in our minds. We shall have to thank the Lord throughout eternity for that willingness if indeed we find it in us. I will go in the strength of the Lord God. There is then a setting out expressed here, though David set out years before. Yet it may be said in the case of the Lord's people, there is a time to set out on pilgrimage and to go forth. And it is a great venture for a carnally minded man, by nature loving this life, loving the comforts and the pleasures and the sins of it by nature, yet by grace to be resolved, as the Lord may assist, to crucify the deeds of the body, to mortify them, and to set out after this one blessed object - eternal life. Well, it must be said, that were it not for the strength of the Lord God, not one, who has set out on that precarious, to sense, precarious pilgrimage, would ever reach its end. But there is strength, and one only strength and that infinite, in which every saint is enabled to go forth. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." And what is this strength of Gods? It is the strength of His eternal, unbreakable covenant. That is the strength upon which every child of God sets forth. Not in their understanding, it may be, at the first, but that is the real strength and bottom and source of every

pilgrimage, and it is an unbreakable strength, unbreakable because made by God in Himself. God, who is faithful and cannot lie, has made this covenant for the benefit, for the salvation of sinners, and so people in the working out of this covenant, by God's power, are brought in His own time, according to the covenant, to go forth in the strength of it. And oftentimes in the early days of his pilgrimage, this going, there is much darkness, and yet much necessity and you have this wonderfully set out, I think, in the case of Queen Esther when she went in, because of necessity, into the king's presence, and it is a very great venture, when a poor sinner, who is first convinced of the holiness of God, and of his own unholiness, ventures for the first time deliberately and solemnly into the presence of the great God in prayer. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." There is a secret strength imparted to such a soul - "Lord save or I perish" is wrung from him by the power of God, and the soul is strengthened by the secret help of God to pray such a prayer. It is a very great thing. It is an exertion of divine power in a soul when he is enabled to go to God. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." The strength of God in the covenant is shown in many ways, but first of all it is shown in the Person of Christ. There the strength of God is. All the fulness of the Godhead is in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the strength of the covenant is in Him, the power of the covenant, and the sealing of the covenant was committed to Him, and He is the token of the covenant. Therefore, when a poor sinner is brought to this resolution to go in the strength of the Lord God, He has this Person before him, this way to God set forth by the Spirit for him to go in. It is a great strength to see Jesus Christ the sealer of the covenant, the bow in the cloud. Nothing can strengthen a soul more than this sight, He feels weak, nothing can invigorate his heart more, and empower him to plead boldly with God, than a sight of this bow in the cloud, of which the anti-type, the Lord God said "I do set My bow in the cloud, and I will show it. I will remember My covenant". O it is a great thing to believe, to know, to see by faith, this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, incarnate deity, in the heavens, and to know that God looks upon Him, and to be enabled to look upon the same Person and the same token of the same unbreakable covenant.

The terms of the covenant are strong. They are, that everyone shall be taught of God, shall know God, shall have written upon their heart, the laws of God, and they shall know Him particularly in this matter, they shall be forgiven their iniquities. And this, the strength of it, is in Christ. The virtue of it is there, the efficacy, the effectualness of it is in Jesus Christ. It has heartened me many times in trying to pray to God, to have a sense of the effectualness of the covenant in Christ. You see He has performed these parts of it, so dreadful to Himself, and so requested for the covenant to be completed in all its provisions, and if He has performed these most difficult parts of it in laying down His holy life, a ransom according to the covenant engagement He entered into, and has gone into heaven as the mediator of this covenant, why, if this is made out to you, wont it be a strength, wont it help you to pray. Nothing will keep you back from prayer if you, knowing what you need, see this strength in Christ. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

I will go in the strength of the promises, the covenant promises. There are many of them, and, as you are led by the Spirit, you will find yourselves at times pleading these promises before the Lord, going therefore in the strength of them. You may go in the strength of promised strength, in the strength of promised help. If you have in your soul a word of promise concerning help concerning a time to come, and you plead that before the Lord, you find you are able to go forth in the strength of that promised help. It is a great thing to be brought to this obedience of faith. There is an activity in faith, a going forth by faith. It is not a stagnant thing, it is a life. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

And when temptation comes, the soul goes in that same strength for deliverance. When you are driven by the enemy, and tempted to despair, and think that you must give everything up, and when perhaps fresh guilt is contracted and you are weakened by that, then it is faith's province, as the power of the Spirit is with you, to enable you to lay hold of a promise of deliverance. Perhaps a promise that has been spoken to you in

days past you find the strength of it is still the same, and plead before the Lord. O how many times I have pleaded some promises I trust the Lord made out to me years ago, and I have found them at times to be effectual; not worn out, but like God Himself, strong, incorruptible, never failing. Has He said "I will help thee?" Do you want help or have you done with the need of His help? If you want help, and He has spoken that to you years ago, you will not think it a little thing to plead it with Him again. The strength of it, if it is immutable, is in Christ, in the covenant. He is immutable in Himself. "God is" No change is with Him. No changes in the covenant, and this covenant He has made and He has assured it by two things that are immutable, by His counsels and by His oath. O the strength of this covenant, higher than the lasting hills, stronger than heaven and earth, and stronger indeed is that man that knows he is within that blessed covenant. To be in the covenant, is to be in Christ, who is the head of the covenant. Immutability is here; it is a great strength. The promises in Christ are yea and amen. They must be fulfilled and therefore, if God has made a covenant promise over to you, then at times you will find the end of that promise when you are very weak, and O what a strength it is then to be enabled to venture forth in all your weakness upon that promise made. Said the Lord to his people of old "Though the mountains depart and the hills be removed yet My kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Now when you are very distressed and troubled and exercised about your condition, about some particular matter, if you are enabled by faith to go in the strength of the Lord and plead that promise with Him and He makes it out to you, His immutability in that promise, how mightily you will be strengthened and you will go on and may have to go on in the strength of that meat many days, as of old the prophet went 40 days upon the meat that was laid to him by God. But you wont fail for want of strength. You might find more comfort for a time to have a stock of strength in yourself, O but the infinite mercy is that it is not in self, but in an ever living, everlasting and immutable God in Christ.

And the strength of divine love the soul goes forth in at

times, and this is in Christ. And what strength is here, divine, eternal, everlasting love. It is spoken of as being strong as death, and it is stronger than death. Death did not kill love in God, love to sinners, for Christ endured and suffered death in love to His people, whereby it is shown that His love is stronger than death. The strength of that love, none can fully realise. Some souls know a little of what the strength of it is, by what it has done for them. It softens a hard heart, that nothing else can soften. Divine love manifested; it makes of an obdurate, proud heart, a meek, quiet, humble, tender, loving one. The strength of divine love; it is seen perhaps in its greatest blaze in the presence of the Redeemer upon Calvary's cross. There is love grappling with death; there, in the garden of Gethsemane, is love grappling with innumerable imputed sins, with divine vengeance. There is that love in its passiveness, in its activity. There strength of divine love in the person of Christ seen, is that upon which a soul can venture his all. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" And when the Lord Jesus came forth from the grave, He spoke a wondrous word to His disciples which, as made life in your soul, will enable you to go, will enable you to endure, and to fight. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory." and ought He not to suffer these things that in His name there might be preached repentance and remission of sins? How He seemed to delight immediately as He came afresh forth from the grave to discover afresh that great work, and the real meaning and intention of His death, that sinners might be led and enabled to repent and to receive from Him the remission of sins. There is a strength in this my friends, for sinners. Not a strengthening of sinners in sin, but a strengthening of sinners to come with repentance and shame and sorrow over sin, for the forgiveness of sins. The resurrection of Christ is a great strength to a soul. "If Christ be not risen then our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins" said Paul. Oh but the strength of that glorious truth in the heart, how it will enable you to venture forth. But now Christ is risen and become the first-fruits of them that slept and we are not left in ignorance of why He rose. He rose because it was not possible He should be holden of death, He being a perfectly holy person. But He was raised again for the

justification of His people. The two things are co-incident, the justification of the Church and the holiness of Jesus Christ. Both were in His resurrection. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God". I will go and meet my enemies in this strength. Have you them? What child of God has not enemies within, and Oh what hard, rough going it is, and how at times one is brought to a stand, not able to go, fearful to go forward, likely to look backward, if not to go backward. Then what is the soul to do? Where is your hope? Where is your strength? Where did you set out? Upon whose arm did you lean then? Upon that same arm must you lean now.

The strength of hope is in Christ. All hope, true, good hope through grace, is in Him. We have a hope set before us in the gospel. It is not a hopeless religion, a blind religion. There is faith, faith that well supplies the want of sight, and there is hope, and all the strength of Jesus Christ, as He is the hope of His people. And what is hope? It is eternal life and eternal glory. It is set before people, and it is the hope of reaching it, centred upon the covenant of grace, as sealed by Christ. This hope is as an anchor of the soul, and Oh the sure anchorage of it. How at times the soul feels the stability of that anchorage, though in a storm. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and it is cast within the veil; wither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." If your soul is anchored there, no ship-wreck can you ever suffer. One sings

Now I have found the ground wherein
My anchor, hope, shall firm remain
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
Before the world's foundation slain

And that Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, in the midst of the throne, and sitting there as John saw Him, with the rainbow around His head, that covenant keeping God in Christ, is the anchorage of our hope of getting to heaven. 'Tis a good hope through grace, stronger than heaven and earth. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

Noah went in this strength of faith. The Lord gave him directions and he went in the strength of God's commandment. Being warned of God of things not seen as yet, he prepared an ark. He went forth, made an ark, went into it. God shut him in. And so sometimes the Lord's people, they go forth upon the strength of a divine command. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" in His gracious commandment, in His gospel precepts, and my friends there is a strength in the precepts. There is a divine strength in the argument that the Lord puts forth at times in the precepts. There is the strength of love in the precepts of the gospel. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" is one of the precepts, and the Lord applies this to people at particular junctures and bends it towards certain duties and commandments, that they are to be performed in His strength. And the Lord owns people in it. How He honoured and owned Noah upon his implicit reliance upon His holy word. How He shut him in, confirmed him, and it may be that at times the Lord's people venture with their little bit of faith, as they feel it to be, with no assurance they venture upon the Lord and find that in the venture the Lord strengthens them and shuts them in. Assures them, confirms His covenant to them as He did to Noah subsequently. God confirmed His covenant to Noah.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God." And the Lord's people go down to death in the same strength. There is nothing to sustain us, when death comes, but this "Underneath are the everlasting arms" It is written, and this must sustain the soul who has lived upon and gone upon God's strength in Christ heretofore. Shall it fail then. The ark was sent forth into the midst of Jordan before the Israelites crossed, and Jesus has gone into the grave and as one sings - left there a rich perfume. And how the sight of that by faith softens the heart and makes even the grave to be robbed of all its terror. "O death, where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" to face death. What a great thing it will be if when we do face it in reality, we are enabled to go in that strength that can never fail. Covenant strength in

an eternal God in Christ.

"I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only". If we make mention of any other righteousness before God we shall be rejected. If justification came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Ah, there is a sufficiency there and it is all glorious. It is the only robe in which a soul can be accepted by God, that imputed righteousness of Christ. "It is unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference. "I will make mention of Thy righteousness". What a wonderful thing it is that this is given to sinners to mention my friends. It is a wondrous thing to me to think that the Lord God has provided this righteousness for sinners to mention before Him as a plea for acceptance. You will know what it is if you know the holiness of God, what a great thing it is to have this shelter, this clothing, this robe. "Thou hast covered me with the garments of salvation with the robe of righteousness" said the prophet, and if we are covered with this righteousness of Christ, that which He came to declare, the infinite righteousness, perfect, unchangeable righteousness of God, whereby He is able to justify an ungodly person that believeth in Jesus, because Jesus suffered the penalties of the law, it is great. It is a very great thing to be clothed in that; to have an understanding of being clothed in it, a consciousness of it, so that you can lift up, your otherwise ashamed head, with a gracious and humble and reverential confidence and plead with God for what you need for defence, for justification, for mercy and for help. "I will make mention of Thy righteousness". And the Lord's people like to make mention of it, they are wont to do it, for there is nothing else worth mentioning and I am quite sure of this, that if you and I know our own rags, if we realise what we really are, we shall be glad enough, and thankful enough to be allowed to mention this righteousness before the Lord. One has said that the righteousness of the law, if leaned upon, would become like a sword in the hand, and peace will die and faith will bleed. If you lean upon your own righteousness, in any of your approaches to God, if you lean upon it in anything, you will find that to be

true - your peace will be gone and your faith will be ready to bleed to death. O but this righteousness of Christs is that upon which the soul can implicitly rely because it is accepted by God on the behalf of those who are brought to plead it before Him. "I will make mention of Thy righteousness even of Thine only".

And they make mention too, these people who live by faith upon the Son of God, and have no strength of their own, and go in His strength, they make mention of His righteousness to his people. It is the topic of their hearts and it is the topic at times of their conversation and it is that which they delight to speak of.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God" even in keeping His commandments and will, in that strength, by faith, make mention of His righteousness and of His righteous acts, of what He has done. Not only of what He has done in the covenant of grace, what He did in laying down His life, what He has done by His Spirit in me. I will make mention of it, and this is done by faith. It is done in love. It is done in the strength of the Lord. It is done with humility and with one object only before it, the glory of God.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God". The strength of the Lord is seen in the church. There is a bond of union called the bond of perfectness; true charity, the love of God, the power of the truth in the church, which is a strength, and it is the strength of God. And, as it is written concerning those of old, it is prophesied that they shall come out of many nations and shall take hold of the skirt of one that is a Jew and they will say, I will go with you for I see that God is with you. There is a strength in it. It is bonded and builded and strengthened together from Christ, being built up in Him and rooted in Him. And this is the one great matter that is not controverted in the church, concerning the righteousness of Christ. It is the one thing that is to be mentioned, the one thing which covers the church's faults, and each individual in the church. It is a great thing that the Psalmist says here "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of

Thy righteousness even of Thine only". It will serve us for all time, for all difficulties, against all enemies and even it will serve us when fresh guilt weakens us, for how shall we regain any strength, any confidence in our souls apart from that strength that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance, He is exalted to give, and the remission of sins, and if we feel very weakened by guilt, may He help us to go in the strength of the Lord and confess and seek His promised pardon. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of Thy righteousness even of Thine only. And what a wonder it will be if we are enabled to go through life in this strength and if we come down to the end in this strength. I am very fearful of my own strength, though I have none, really, but there is that in my nature that loves to be strong and I realise at times seriously, the terrible possibility of becoming strong in self, and I am sure of this that what is recorded in the scripture is true concerning that. A certain king, it was written, that when he was in his first days simple and lent upon the Lord, the Lord helped him marvelously, but when he became strong then he turned aside. But O if we can be weak, if the Lord only, in His gracious discipline, weakens us, as that we are forced, and directs us, so as that we are directed, to lean upon Him, as the Church is spoken of in the Canticles - "Leaning upon her Beloved", then we have that to lean upon which will sustain us in every difficulty, in all desertion, in every exposure, against all enemies, and that will sustain us in Jordan. And if we are clothed in that righteousness which we have mentioned - "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" O what a welcome will await such on the morning of the resurrection. What a welcome will await such when they have done with this time concerning their souls. How they will be welcomed by God in that righteousness which is Christs. With that robe on there can be no rejection and this is the hope that attracts the soul. The resurrection is very attractive. It is based upon Christ's resurrection and the hope of it is immutable; its strength is infinite because it is fixed in Christ who is risen from the dead and is at the right-hand of the Majesty on high. I would then that the Lord would put this before us and cause that it might be an exhilarating and strengthening word to faith and that we might

be enabled to be willing to be weak in self that we might be strong in the Lord. As it is written "I will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name saith the Lord." May He forgive what has been amiss. Amen.