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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden at Galeed  
Chapel, Brighton, on Wednesday Evening 26th April  
1922

TEXT: Psalm 80 verses 1 and 2

"Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, Thou that  
ledest Joseph like a flock; Thou that  
dwest between the Cherubims, shine forth.  
Before Ephraim, and Benjamin and Manasseh  
stir up Thy strength, and come and save us."

This is the prayer of a man of God who was not  
contented with prayer, who could not be satisfied with  
knowing in his intellect that there was a God, and that  
there was a way to Him, but who wanted, and could be  
satisfied with nothing less than, access to that God, and  
attention of his case given by that God, and so he  
seeks that the great God would give ear, that is  
listen, lend his ear, pay attention, to his petition. Such  
praying as this, such faith, as is expressed in this  
word, is a very rare thing. It is of a peculiar kind. Many  
there are that pray, but few pray to purpose. Few pray in  
faith, and therefore there is but very little result from  
prayer. Alas, that we should be so often satisfied with  
praying. The Psalmist addresses God under a peculiar and very  
blessed name and character. He addresses Him as He has  
manifested Himself, and as He subsists in the Person of  
His Son, Jesus Christ. "O shepherd of Israel" And this  
is a secret. Such an address to God, made by the heart  
of a man, is a secret known to the saints only. To approach  
God, to approach an angry judge, a holy, glorious God, for  
a sinner to approach Him, would mean simply that he  
would be consumed. And attempts to approach Him in  
prayer by men who feel to need Him, seem to be quite useless  
and they find oftentimes, in attempting to approach God  
in prayer, nothing but repulse, nothing but a feeling  
sense of condemnation and hardness, nothing but the

terribleness of that which they have in their own hearts - sin and consequently the curse of it. God is holy, and when a man knows that, and attempts to approach Him as he is - a sinner - he does realise that that attempt is very solemn, very difficult, and cannot - only as faith is given to him - attempt it; cannot find courage to come and tell his case into the ear of his creator, law-giver, and judge. But here the Psalmist had instruction, gracious instruction. He had received by faith, and he knew in his heart, and obeyed by faith that knowledge, and prayed to God under the character of the shepherd of Israel. What a difference, between approaching a great and holy and angry God, and a holy, great, blessed, compassionate shepherd. And this name of the God of Israel here, is not merely a name. What is in the scriptures of truth is. .... There is a substance represented by the word of God, and the names, certainly the names of God, represent His character, His offices, His reality, and the saints of God are brought to know this. They are brought away in their souls, each one in the Lord's own time, from the darkness and terror and unapproachableness of the Mount Sinai, with all the thunder and curse of the divine law, the holy, essentially holy presence of God, to Mount Zion and upon that mountain, the Shepherd of Israel. This is Jesus Christ, the way of life, the Mediator of the new covenant. He is called by Paul, by the Holy Ghost, in the Hebrews, the great Shepherd of the sheep. There the Apostle says, speaking of God the Father, Who brought from the dead "The God of peace that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep" There is a flock then, and that flock has a shepherd. One flock, one fold, and one shepherd, there is in the kingdom of heaven. God has but one shepherd, that is His own Son and this character of the Son of God is very merciful, and very attractive, as it is made out to a poor sinner, for the shepherd is one who is charged with the responsibility and the care and all necessary attention to, and protection of, and feeding of, the church,

the flock. Jesus Christ is charged with all this. O shepherd of Israel. Israel after the Spirit, for they are not all Israel that are of Israel; that is to say, all Jews are not Christians. But there is an election of grace, a remnant according to the election, both from the Jews and the Gentiles, and Christ has made them both one, broken down the middle wall of partition, and there is one fold and one shepherd. One church, one covenant of grace, one Lord, one Mediator of that covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is a true Shepherd, fully equipped, and qualified in every particular for that blessed office. O Shepherd of Israel, and one might say with regard to Him that particularly He, as the Shepherd of His flock, does what the shepherd literally does; He goes before them. "When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them". And my dear friends, this is to a sheep a very blessed thing, for all his courage, and all his faith, and all his strength, and all the clearness of his way, he derives from that blessed truth, that the Shepherd goes before him. He went before the church. He went before her when He, by God the Father, was set up to be her head in the covenant. He was set up then to be the Shepherd, and went before her in His sacred will and in His eternal love. He went before her when He came to be a man, and then took particularly the charge of her. He was charged then with all her life, and all her protection, and so, taking the church, He must go before her through trouble and affliction and temptation, and moreover through hell and curse and death, this shepherd went before her. Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock. He does lead His people. He is now exalted at the Father's right-hand, but He still leads His people. He led them by the hand of Moses like a flock through the wilderness. He leads them still. It is His presence by the Holy Ghost, it is His word spoken in their hearts, it is His providence, by which He leads them like a flock. His Spirit, His truth, He leads them by. "Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." The Lord goes on ahead of His church at all times, and particularly when she goes to battle, to defend her,

and lest she should stray, He goes before her, though she does not always see Him. It would be a great thing for some of us if we could say we always saw a Forerunner - our Shepherd, our Captain, our Guide - going before us. We should not then be so unwilling to go forward. We should not then be so dismayed by the difficulties we meet with, nor with the darkness we are surrounded by. But this is true, that Christ never alters His character. He deals as a Shepherd. He is a Shepherd. He does lead, and never fails to lead, really, His people, though they may not perceive His leadings. Now here the prophet addresses this sacred, this divine, this great Shepherd. Give ear, listen, Lord. Attend to my petition. Give ear to my cries O Shepherd of Israel. It is as though the Psalmist would remind the Lord of this, His character, and appeal to Him on the grounds of that - His office in the church. It is a great venture of faith, and it has love in it, when a sinner can appeal to the Lord Jesus, appeal to Him in His very office and character and in His position over the church, and ask to be attended to because of that. "Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."

"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims" It is this point that attracted me and of which I would like to speak a little. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." You will remember that Moses was taught by God to teach the people that they should make an ark, a gold covered ark, and in that ark they should put the testimony of God, and that over that ark they should put a golden mercy-seat, and at each end of the mercy-seat there was a cherub, and that set forth in type, was a shadow of this that is here spoken of in prophecy - The Shepherd of Israel dwelling between the cherubims. Involved in this sacred truth there are many, many blessed truths, for one truth is involved here particularly, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, He, as I have just hinted, went before as shepherd, before His church, through the wilderness of temptation and trouble and pain and curse, and death, and is raised again. He is brought again from the dead

by the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He is brought again from the dead, and the faith of the church is fixed on Him now, as having been slain but being now alive for evermore, and sat down in that gracious position between the cherubims. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims" that is on the mercy-seat. This is very attractive to a poor, sinful, burdened, guilty, weak soul. One who is dismayed because of his sin, and one who at times finds in his heart an insatiable thirst to be right with God, to have some true knowledge of God, and access to Him, and acceptance with Him. This is a sacred truth to him. It is like the oil upon his head and upon his spirit. It takes away the edge of that hardness; it removes the terribleness of divine holiness, and makes it soft, though no less glorious; makes it bearable to him, and hope is revived in the soul, and into a gracious exercise as this truth is made known, that the Shepherd of Israel, He who is charged with the life, and care and sustenance and protection and all that the church needs, He, the Shepherd, dwells between the cherubims. Cherubims were used when sin came in, by God. They were used to keep the way of the tree of life. They were set in the way to the tree of life in the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword went every way to protect that tree, to prevent man from reaching the tree of life, and thus living before God as a sinner, and violating His law, and yet living for ever. God's justice barred the way of life then. Now God's justice, and God's mercy, God's truth, God's righteousness, God's faithfulness, God's compassion and God's love, all, are to come in the fulness of them, in this Person, this divine Shepherd, who dwells between the cherubims on the mercy-seat. Through Him men obtain access to God. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims" This truth will be sure, as it is a living truth in the power of the Holy Ghost in the heart, to call forth petitions, petitions coming from desire, whetted in the heart's appetite, quickened by the truth itself, to Him, for access to Him, or a sight of Him, as here the prophet

says - "O Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth". There is expressed here a point of experience. You will notice it says that Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, dwells between the cherubims. We read of Him, when He ascended on high, that He sat down on the right-hand of the Father. That is to express the preeminence of His station, to express that He would never more leave that place. Also to express, doubtless, that He had really finished all that mission which He came to perform, His suffering work, His sacrifice, His redeeming work, and He dwells between the cherubims. Not merely visits that throne, but He dwells there, and this is of very great encouragement to sinners. There is never a time when the throne of God's mercy is vacant, never a time when a person, approaching it, shall find an empty seat, but He dwells there. He ever lives to make intercession. He ever lives to dispense mercy from that throne, but here expressed is what the saints know, that though this is a blessed truth, a truth that sustains them in their privations and troubles, and temptations and darkness and desolations, that He dwells there. They cannot give that up though, alas, they are apt sometimes to forget it. But it comes afresh, afresh to them by the Spirit, and it comes like a sweet anchor to the soul, as it is written - "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" But a saint is not satisfied merely to know that. There is satisfaction in the knowledge of it, but he wants to go further, rather he wants the Lord to go further and so with the Psalmist he says sometimes "Shine forth" Lord beam upon me. Lord Thou art there, Thou art on the mercy-seat. Let me see Thee there, and look upon me from thence. Give ear to my petition, O Shepherd of Israel; shine forth from Thy present position. Leave it not, but shine from it, that I may see the mercy-seat, that I may see Thee in Thy kingly glory, that I may see Thy smile and feel it in my heart. Has this any interest to us? Do we know, have

we ever known what the Psalmist means here by "shine forth"? It is different, as I believe, distinct from that faith in the resurrection and entrance into heaven of Christ, which is given to the saints, but it is such a powerful shining from that throne into the soul as leads the soul and gathers it up to the mercy-seat, to perceive Christ there, so as to enable the soul by the shining and the strength which it brings, to bring itself there, to bring its petition there, and its case there, and to lay hold of the strength of God in Christ and seek to have peace made.

"Shine forth" To believe the Lord Jesus Christ from time to time does let into the hearts of His people a ray of His glory, and it brings satisfaction. It puts strength into the person. It is His presence that is prayed for, as the Psalmist in the Psalms we were reading just now believed and said to his soul, that the presence of the Lord should be his salvation, that he should yet praise Him for the health of His countenance. It is when the Lord makes His presence felt, when He so manifests Himself as that the sinner can really feel and say - there my Lord sits. He is in my heart, yet on His throne, a mystery, a blessed mercy, which brings the soul to know a little of what it is to be united to Him who is in heaven. It gathers up the affections to Him, and the hopes to Him and it takes away, as I have already said, the bitterness and the fierceness of that terror which comes into the conscience through a sense of guilt, with no sense of a Mediator. "Shine forth as the Mediator, as my Shepherd" and we need this, for all is dark and vain and wild in us without this shining. A soul may be kept, as it were, by the secret power of this Shepherd, be guided by Him, though he cannot see Him, but with regard to any comfort, peace or joy, he can have none really, without this shining. "Shine forth" in love, so that my hard, cold heart may be melted. What can melt a hard heart but the love of Jesus Christ? And what is this shining forth, but that He should send, and does send according to His promise, the Holy Ghost to take of His

things and to show them to the soul, to illuminate the understanding and to warm the heart and to instruct the mind and to comfort the soul by the things of Christ which He takes. It is a shining forth, and we need this in particular things at various times in our souls! experience and particularly this - we need that the Lord should shine forth into our hearts in the blessed rays of His one finished atonement, the merit of it. The atonement is done with respect to the reality of it, with respect to the suffering of it, it is finished, it is made by the sacrifice of Christ, but there is a glory in it, in the merit of it, in the reality of it, in the love of it, in the efficacy of it, which the saints shall long pray to know, and it is like a shining of Christ's countenance in the soul when this is brought. "Shine forth" meeting my dark case, take this guilt away. A ray of this, a ray of living light thus let into the soul, of the atonement of Christ, will be healing, as it is written "that the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings," and He shines forth sometimes sweetly in His faithfulness. He is a faithful High Priest. It is a very great thing to be enabled to see by faith Him who is God and Man in one person, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, a faithful High Priest. "Shine forth" in this Thy faithfulness to Thy covenant promises. His faithfulness was seen in His sufferings, but His faithfulness is known now when He condescends to communicate to the soul, and to make over afresh, the covenant promises to the soul, and to tell the sinner, that though he has been base and vile and turned away from Him, yet he shall be healed for the covenant runs thus "I will make an everlasting covenant with you and will not turn away from you to do you good, but I will put my fear in your hearts that you shall not turn away from me" and that is the faithfulness of God which we need, for Him not only to be faithful in Himself. He must be faithful in Himself; He was to express that faithfulness in the power of His keeping grace, by holding us to Himself in the

exercise of the fear of His name by the Holy Ghost.

"Shine forth" And sometimes we want Him to shine forth to show us where we are, to show us what we are, to show us our sins. None can really convince a sinner but the Spirit of Christ, and the sinner sometimes is brought to this - "Lord I am dark, I am cold, I am far off. Thou doest not speak to me, Lord, shine forth into my case, into my life. Shine forth that I may see things in Thy light, that I may be brought to the light, that outstanding matters may be discovered to me, that I may be enabled to confess them"

"Shine forth". You can venture to ask this when you have a perception of the mercy-seat, God filling it in the person of Emmanuel, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. It encourages a sinner to ask that light, the light of God, may shine unto him. And also there is a very real need felt by the saints at times, that the Lord should shine forth in His wisdom. Oh how unwise, how ignorant some of us feel. How unable to take a step. How unable to unravel the tangles of our lives. How intricate our way seems sometimes, both outwardly and inwardly, in spiritual experience, and we do need the Lord in His wisdom to shine forth, and to appear to us, and appear for us, in making our way plain and, my dear friends, it is a very great thing to see and believe in a compassionate High Priest, who is infinitely wise, and able to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. If a sinner asks wisdom of God through Jesus Christ, and that is the only way he can properly ask, and it is a free and open way for an ignorant sinner, confessing his sin, to ask for it, he will never be sent away, but wisdom will be given, only not fleshly wisdom, but divine wisdom. We are such fools, some of us, that we really, at times, think that it would be better for us to have natural, fleshly, wisdom than divine. The Lord shows His wisdom so as to confound nature. Oftentimes He makes a way in the sea. He leads people, blind people, in a way that they knew not, in a way wherein the flesh is mortified, and human wisdom is eaten up, and made folly, and then shows His wisdom. He shines forth in it. This is discipline. It is the work of the Holy Ghost in the

soul, and men taught of God are brought to submit to it, and at times to really desire it, that the Lord should shine forth in His wisdom, in His light, in His faithfulness, in His mercy. "Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee". Cannot you manage your own way? Does your own folly perplex you? Do you see various ways before you and think, well I cannot, I do not know which way I ought to take, which way I should take. What a great thing it is for a man in such a position, really to be brought to the throne of grace, and ask in faith that He would illuminate his mind, and instruct him in the way that he should go. It is very condescending of God to do it. Some of us at times feel greatly to fear lest He will never do it for us again, but there is this to be said, if indeed it be so, that we have darkened our way by our folly, if we have turned aside from the Lord, if in some particular things we have disobeyed His voice, and therefore the throne rises into darkness, and confusion, His mercy remains the same, His compassions and patience are infinite, and, my friends, when you see Him afresh in His position, in His characters, in His infinite sufficiency, you will find courage to ask Him even then, though guilty, to shine forth. Nothing can mend an evil case, a self-procured dark case, but this shining. Mercy is mixed with it, divine mercy, covenant mercy, everlasting mercy, mercy brought by the blood of Christ. All that the saints seek at the hands of God, all that they receive at His gracious hands, comes to them through the Person and the death of Christ. Thou that dwellest between the cherubims. This is very wonderful for it opens divinity to a sinner. It opens the infinite resources of God to a sinner. All that we can possibly need in any part of our lives either spiritual or external, in the church, in our relatives, in our circumstances, physically, all that we can need for life and for death is, as it were, freely opened to men who are sinners, through this Person - the Shepherd of Israel. He is a faithful Shepherd. There is nothing that you can need that He has not to give, and that He will not give, Unbelief will reverse that. The devil's temptations will bear against that a testimony in your

heart but sometimes faith in the Holy Ghost's power believes it and O how it allays that dismay which otherwise enshrouds the soul, when he sees and believes that this blessed Shepherd is not a frail, and fickle, and unable shepherd, such as a natural one might be, but that He is God and that He is a Shepherd faithful in all His care, full in all His resources, infinite in His wisdom, unchanging in His love, Almighty in His power, and that He is the Son of God. "Shine forth" Sometimes some long for this, that He would shine forth in the testimony of divine justification. When the soul feels condemned, when he realises that Christ has brought in, wrought out, a righteousness, not for Himself, and that He is the very Son of God incarnate, O how it encourages that poor sinner, though filled with condemnation in himself, to seek for this, for that which this great Shepherd has to give - justification. Shine forth in that. Would not that be a shining like the clear shining after rain, a morning without clouds in the soul?; for when He shines in justification the sky is absolutely clear then. He is there to do it, my friends. Some may have had some small degree of experience of this such as they could never describe. The clearness of it, the clearness of their sky, the ease of their conscience, the freeness of their spirits, the warmth of their hearts, the brightness of their hope, then, could never be exaggerated, but we want Him again to shine forth, and in some cases it may be we may say we want Him to shine forth more brilliantly, and more continuously but is it not a mercy that this Sun never sets? That He, though we do not feel His shining, does always shine, and that though now interruptions come, if we have felt His shining, if now we are seeking a fresh shining, this is to be said, that one day He will shine without any interruption, shine into the very being and will of all the saints, so as to fill them, irradiating them with His glory, and goodness and mercy and love.

"Thou that dwellest among the cherubims, shine forth". May the Lord help us to answer this question

in our own conscience whether, as before God, we, in secret, have ever perceived the shining forth of Jesus Christ into our dark souls, so as that we have been led by that light to the throne of grace, to the holy hill of God as the Psalmist prayed in the Psalm we just now read - "Send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill." It does bring a sinner to the holy hill of God when Christ shines forth.

"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Thy strength and come and save us." It is an exercise desired of the Lord by the Psalmist in a special case, that, in this particular circumstance, in this particular exercise, in this set-fast place, in this particular difficulty, or temptation, the Lord's strength might be manifested; "Stir up Thy strength" Before Ephraim, and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Thy strength" Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh were the three tribes that went forward immediately behind the Ark of the testimony when they set forward, and it is as though the Psalmist here would use that circumstance. And so, in this particular thing in which the person must move in his exercise in which he is set fast, O Lord come, and let Thy strength, the strength of Thy salvation be exerted. Let Thy power be manifested in deliverance. Come, and stir up Thy strength in my behalf, and save me. Come for salvation to us. Nothing will deliver us out of a set-fast place properly, but the coming to us for salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Psalmist said in one Psalm, His presence is His salvation. Come and save us. If He comes He will come for that purpose. He saves in various ways. He may not always save a person in the way in which he thinks he needs to be saved in a particular thing, A man may be in trouble in his soul, in darkness, in confusion, in bondage, in fear, in a desolate, barren state. Now when the Lord comes to save him out of that state, He may not come merely alone and first of all with comfort. He may come with a scourge of small cords. He may come with a reproof, a rebuke.

His light, His word, may come and show the soul where he has been and fill him with shame, yet it is to salvation, for when the Lord deals with a man He brings him to the obedience of faith, and when He shows him where he has been, and rebukes him in his conscience, and in his heart, He brings the poor sinner to acknowledge it. It is to say "Lord I have procured this to myself." Well then what? The Lord says - not that you shall despair; not that you, having procured this to yourself, shall remain in this bondage, and hardness and fear, but "I will come and save him." And the Lord condescends to encourage His people to return to Himself, and all on the basis of the finished redemption. No return to God, but through Christ. Return unto Me, backsliding souls, dark souls, needy souls, return unto Me. In confessions, in repentance, shall I have to go. Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee, and that is salvation. Perhaps sometimes the people of God do get into an acquaintance with David in the 119th Psalm, in their own souls' experience. He says there in one verse that he became like a bottle in the smoke. 'Tis a very solemn experience expressed there, for a bottle in the smoke is incapable of receiving anything. It is not only empty; an empty vessel can receive things. An empty soul is fit for the gospel, but a bottle in the smoke is incapable of receiving anything, for it is useless, crooked, leaky. Well, the Lord alone can save such an one. I do not know how it is with some of you, but I have known that experience to be in my soul's feelings, so unutterably, woefully dark and dead, as to feel incapable of receiving even the gospel. That is a bitter case, but the Lord is exalted to give repentance, and He can bring the healing and cure, and show the abundance of peace and truth that there is in Himself. He can heal; He can restore; restoring mercy is with Him. "Come and save us" Save us to the uttermost. He is able to do so. Paul says so by the Holy Ghost "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." He can frame the soul; He can empty the soul; He can cure diseases;

He can make the soul fit for Himself and come and save. Well, this is a very great petition that the prophet has here, and may the Lord make it our petition, as it is necessary to us, and surely no saint of God here, no poor convinced sinner here, could say properly that it is not suitable to him. May the Holy Ghost produce the petition in our hearts, and enable us to plead before the Lord, so that we may receive in our cases, the answer, and be saved and magnify His name

Amen.