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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 17 May 1931

ROMANS 4 v 6, 7 and 8

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of  
the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness  
without works, saying, Blessed are they  
whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins  
are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord  
will not impute sin"

The things of God are exceedingly solemn. God is very holy, very high, and very terrible out of His holy places. His perfections are beyond all our comprehension, and in His sight we, His creatures, are but as the small dust of the balance. But we are His creatures, and we are sinners against Him, and one of the greatest blessings that can ever come to any man is divine conviction of sin. It seems, if one may make a judgement, that the great proportion of religion that is in the world today has no reference to that awful thing, sin, and that blessed thing, salvation. Religion that looks nice, and feels nice to the flesh, leaves a man with his heart unploughed. It leaves a man to hope for the best, and hope it will be alright at last, and hope that he can enjoy this world until he can enjoy it no longer, and then he can go to heaven, and enjoy himself there. That is the religion for the most part with which the world is filled, and a solemn thing it is, because God is Judge of all, and His judgement is righteous judgement, and when He comes to judge finally, there will be no appeal against His judgement. What He says, what He pronounces toward a person, will be effectual, eternally so. Men may cover themselves with a smattering of religion, and deceive themselves by it, and they will find plenty to help them in this day, plenty of preachers to help them, and their own nature will help them. But if that covering is not ripped off in this life by God's mercy and power, woe be to them. The Scriptures make it abundantly plain that the way to heaven is narrow, and difficult; that there are many who are called, but few chosen; that many go in the broad way to hell, and that few find the narrow, and straight way to heaven. The Lord says so, and it is the

height of folly with us if we neglect to seek certainty in this matter; if we are left to ourselves to deceive ourselves with false peace when the Lord has not said peace. This Scripture that I have read for a text can only possibly be appreciated by such as have the conviction of sin. Therefore I must notice, first of all, what sin is. Sin is that which is contrary to God in us, and sin is first of all in our nature. We are made sinners, not by divine creation, but by our federal union with our first parents. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" - "Or in whom", that is in Adam, "all have sinned", as the margin reads. Now this is a truth that the Scripture reveals, that you and I, and the whole human race, are truly, and solemnly, involved in the fall of Adam from his uprightness, and innocence, and perfection, in which he was created, and death came, not merely mortality, but death, that is alienation from God, the loss of the knowledge of God, the loss of the image of God's glory, the loss of a heart and a soul to love the Lord with all the power that we possess. This is the death; a mind perverted from the truth, affections alienated from God, the only source and fountain of light, life, and love, so that man is a sinner, contrary to God. His nature it is to transgress God's law, and to turn away from every right thing. This is universal. Men may deny it and do deny it, because they cannot understand - who can understand- the communication of the sin of Adam to the whole human race. But that it is a fact is solemnly evident. It is evident in the world, and it is evident in every individual, so that man likes not to retain God in His knowledge. Now let your honest conscience answer, some of you here; if you could but forget God, and forget that He is holy, and forget that He is omniscient, and forget that He will punish sin, and forget that you must die, and appear before Him, would you be troubled about sin? Would you be uncomfortable in the enjoyment of it? Would you feel any lack? No. And why? Because you are dead. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" and come short of the glory of God. And so God looks down from heaven upon the sons of men and says He will look to see if there be any who did understand, any that were wise, any that seek after God, and after His omniscient scrutiny of the whole of the whole human race, His judgement is this - There is not one, not one that doeth good, not one that seeketh after God; no, not one. That is the condition of the human race naturally, born in

sin, shapen in iniquity.

Now the Holy Spirit of God does, in His invincible power, come and convict men of this truth, causes men to know and to possess their iniquities; to know that they are sinners; to feel it. And these convictions are invincible, they are different from convictions by nature, as when one has qualms of conscience that all may not be quite right; as when one fears punishment, and that fear of punishment soon wears off by the enjoyment of some earthly trifle. Many people have much natural conviction of sin which is short of the invincible work of the Holy Ghost, but the Lord Jesus declares that the Spirit when He came would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement, and when He does that it is a merciful thing; it is really a time of love. It is a time when divine life is communicated, when people, who before knew nothing, now begin to know themselves, and God. Now this is the new birth. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, and this is by the sovereign act of Jehovah in sending to the people that are chosen before to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. Let me say this, that if you and I are never convinced by the Spirit of God of our sins, and are never brought in before God guilty for them, then whatever religion we may have, or think we have, we shall lose at last. That is a very solemn Scripture where the Lord Jesus said - From him that hath not, let that be taken which he seemeth to have. And if we seem to have religion, and seem to have joy in it, and hope in it, and nice feelings in it, and are never brought as poor, lost sinners, helpless, before God's throne of grace for mercy, then I say, our religion will die with us. It will be taken away. And the mercy of this we shall never be able to really know the fullness of, the depths of, for it is God's work alone to convince of sin, to make a man perceive what David perceived when, though he had sinned against his fellow creatures, his declaration was this - "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight". All sin is against God, and sin is a very wide thing. There are different forms of sin, and some people flatter themselves because they do not commit certain forms of sin, therefore things are fairly well with them. But my friends, all sin God marks, whether it be sins that the world would reprobate, or whether it be secret sins. He will set the latter in the light of His countenance. Whether it be sins of thought, word, or deed; sins of omission, or commission, all in God's sight are

sin, and He cannot pass by them. The law of God is exceedingly broad, it goes to the whole extent of your powers; your being is not your own. People live as if it were. We naturally do so, Our thoughts are our own. Our lips are our own. "We are lords, we will come no more unto Thee" O the pride of human nature; bits of hell we are by nature, and yet we are proud. "Vain man would be wise though he be born like a wild ass's colt". But the work of conviction is very, very solemn, and very merciful. It makes a man see how that he has come short of the glory of God, for all the light of heavenly conviction gives testimony of God in the heart. It is sin against God, that is the point. A thought that you entertain, that no person on earth knows, will be sufficient for God to mark, and bring you in guilty before Himself on account of it. Do you rebel against this? Do you, in your pride, desire, and endeavour to set up a standard whereby you may keep your conscience fairly quiet? Remember this, that God's is the standard by which He will judge, not yours. You keep your outside clean, and therefore think that because your fellow men think you are upright, and that you admire yourself, God must accept you. That is false, it wont stand in the day of judgement.

In the text there are two contrary things that God will impute to men. He will either impute righteousness to men, or sin; that is reckon it to them, count it theirs, fix it on them with all the consequences of it. Now sinner, if the Holy Spirit shows you that the thought of foolishness is sin; that every ungodly speech you have uttered He has marked, and will bring you into judgement for it; that every unlawful look you have cast, that every ungracious act you have wrought, that all the forgetfulness of God you are guilty of, that all the short-comings of His glory in your whole life of which you are guilty; that He claims from you perfection of obedience, love intense in the capacity of your affections, submission perfect in your will, and the knowledge of Himself, and therefore adoration, and worship; that He claims all this, and that you have never rendered it to Him, I say, if you are brought to feel that He will bring all this into judgement and read out before you, and into your ears, every transgression of His law, every covetous desire which is idolatry, how will you stand? How will you do? If God fixes these things on you, multitudes of sins, innumerable transgressions, as many transgressions, one might say without exaggeration, as breaths you

draw from your birth to your death, I say if God fixes these on you, reckons them to you, imputes them to you, with all their consequences, this will be it - "Depart from Me ye cursed into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels", and if you begin to say, But I was religious, but I belonged to a certain church, but I have done many great things in Thy Name; if you begin to object, these objections will not be heard; they are invalid. God's judgement is righteous judgement. O sinner, how will you do, when He banishes you for your sins? Prayerless, heedless of His claims, forgetful of His authority, neglectful of His honour, seeking only your own things, your own pleasures, living without God, and without hope in the world; how will you do when He punishes you, when He fixes the consequences of your sin on your person irretrievably? It would be well to think of this. It will be a great mercy if one sinner here today were brought face to face with Eternity, and with his sins, and were brought to realise his need, deep need, of divine mercy. Every covering will be stripped off, the covering of hypocrisy, the covering of religion that does not come from the Spirit, the covering of excuses. All things will be stripped off one day, and then you will be exposed to God. And the chapter previous to this from which the text is taken, declares by the Spirit to us that we are all alike in respect of sin. Not that all commit the same enormities, but all are sinners, and all have come short of the glory of God, so that if there be any polite person here who thinks that, because he has always been religious; who, because he has never done anything particularly wrong; because he has always walked in right things, and because he never remembers the time when he had not a heart for religion, therefore God will deal mercifully with him, may the Lord take that covering off your heart; it wont stand. The thing will be then, whether at any time the Spirit of God brought you to deal with God.

Now in the text the Holy Spirit declares that some men have a blessedness attaching to them, that that blessedness consists in God not imputing to them their sins, but imputing to them righteousness. And do remember this, that God will impute to you personally, and to me, either sin, or righteousness. There is no half way. A moderate, moral man may think that he will stand a fair chance with other people, but this is it, either God will justify you, or condemn you.

Either He will bless you, or He will curse you. The human race is divided into two, two sections, one loved with an everlasting love, the other left to their own devices and reserved unto the day of perdition of ungodly men. Then I might, I ought, we ought, to ask the question whether we have been brought before God, whether we are brought before Him with our sins on our conscience, an intolerable load; guilt is intolerable, sin is so heavy, so heavy in its demerit as will sink the persons upon whom it is fixed into hell. It is so heavy to be felt upon the conscience of those to whom the Spirit grants the mercy of conviction, as that it is felt to be intolerable. A slight scratch, a notion of being not quite holy as you ought to be, will not be very heavy, not heavy enough to make you seek relief till you get it. But when God brings your iniquities, and wreathes them about your neck so as to strangle, and choke you, and lays them upon your conscience so as to lay you low, then relief is needed. And where shall that relief be found? Fools that we are, we seek relief in every way but the right one by natural light. We think to find relief by mending our ways, by doing many things, by turning to religion, by multiplying duties in religion, by taking care of our thoughts. All, all these things in themselves may be right, but there is no relief there. Giving up worldly things, walking more strictly in some ways, cutting off this thing, cutting off the other thing, these things may be resorted to, and be resorted to with a view to obtaining thereby peace, but some of you might have been occupied in that matter, and still feel as far off from peace as you were before. Indeed, you may feel rather worse. It is good to amend the life; it is proper to be occupied in religious duties, but these things are not the ground of peace. Yea, as far as they are leaned to with a view to obtaining peace, so far they are in themselves sins. They are really independence. They are really a negation of the gospel, a replying against God. We little think it, but it is so, and, pursued to the end, will leave a man without hope. If a man is justified by the law, then Christ died in vain. And if a man seeks to be justified by the law, then you read he is fallen from grace. If he finds, if you find, O sinner, quietness of mind, peace of conscience, hope for eternity, on the ground of what you do, of your reformation, then you have so far fallen from grace; Christ is become of no effect to you. If you can find peace that way, you wont want Him. If you can find relief by your own efforts, then the doings of another will be of no interest to

you. O, but the Spirit of God spoils men's works, overturns their peace, disturbs their consciences, lets them see that nothing will do, nothing short of Christ will really do, and therefore, until the Lord comes to such a sinner, and applies the atonement to him, he must lie down in his shame, and the very best place he can come to, to lie down in his shame and find his confusion covering him. It would be much better with many professors if they were only brought to lie down in their shame, and have their confusion covering them until the Lord came and bid them rise. Jesus Christ is the Friend of sinners, and His friendship of sinners is very vast, wondrously deep, and He comes like the good Samaritan came, where the people are, half dead, wounded, bruised, and lying helpless. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Do you need a physician? Is your case broken? Is your soul diseased? Are all your powers depraved? Is judgement before you? Is guilt on your conscience? Does God's standard seem too high for you? Do you fear the pit will shut her mouth upon you? Well, painful are these things. Fearful they are, I know. Some here know what they are, may know them now, but these are conditions to which the Lord Jesus Christ attends. It is the sick, not the whole; it is the lost, not the half saved; it is the ungodly in his feelings, and not the person who hopes to get to heaven by making God his debtor; it is these people to whom the Lord Jesus comes. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of that man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works". This comes right over everything, it turns the thing right round. Here is a man with sin on his conscience, with ungodliness in his nature, with fear in his mind, trouble in his soul, disease there, and finding his efforts do not avail to bring peace to him, and he cannot in any wise lift up himself. He cannot excuse his sins. He may have done, he may have said to the Lord in justifying himself, O, but this, and that is the reason, and excuse himself because of circumstances, and then, when he does so, the Lord will contend with him. "I will contend with thee, because thou sayest I have not sinned". Why, but to say that you have not sinned is to make God a liar, and God, if He deals with you mercifully, will make you see that it is an evil thing to justify yourself. But when you are brought down to condemn yourself, and to acknowledge your sins to the Lord, and to tell Him you can do nothing but condemn yourself; by your own efforts you can no more fit yourself for heaven and for His presence than you could make a world,

and are enabled to fall down in your shame, that is the position - "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" The Lord said it to the very people of whom we were reading these solemn indictments in the 2 Jeremiah - "Only acknowledge thine iniquity". Do not do anything else in order to obtain mercy, though you will do, much else. If you are brought to acknowledge your iniquity with sincerity, you will be brought to walk uprightly, consistently. No man acknowledges his iniquity to God in sincerity of heart who, at the same time, lives in wickedness. The blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, I say, this comes right over everything, blots it all out. Does not merely amend, does not patch the thing up, does not rub a little off here, and there; no, it does not polish nature. It comes right over the whole thing and blots out all the sin, makes it as if it were not. When God reckons righteousness to a man without works, that is a mighty thing, the thing is done, the sin is blotted out, the man is constituted righteous by the judgement of Him who judges righteously. But why does He do it? How can He do it? The blessedness lies in this, in the experience of it. Blessedness is enjoyed; in the state of it there is a deep blessedness. In the source of it there is an infinite blessedness, solemn blessedness. How can God do this, impute righteousness without works? Well He cannot do it because you have a righteousness of your own which He reckons to you. If you expect Him to impute your righteousness to you, and He does so, you will find yourself rejected at last. If your righteousness is the only covering you have, when you stand before the judgement throne, I say, if your own works are the only covering you have, God imputing them to you, you may as well be covered with the blackest sins man is capable of committing, for you will just be rejected, and I believe what the Apostle Paul was brought to, every person taught by the Divine Spirit will be brought to sooner or later. He said that He, for the knowledge of Christ, counted his own righteousness, and everything that was gain to him, but loss, and dung, and dross, and the Scriptures declare that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The Lord will teach you that it will be eternal damnation to be found in your own righteousness, but God does impute righteousness to men, and that, not because they are not sinners. He will impute either sin or righteousness to you, and to me, personally, and if He does not impute sin to us it will not be because we are not sinners, and if He impute righteousness to us, it will not



be because we have a righteousness that is intrinsically perfect. What is it then? It is in this, in the spring of it, that God, by His infinite grace, did impute the trespasses, and iniquities, and sins of His people to the Lord Jesus. The key of this text will be found in the 53 Isaiah as I feel, where it is there declared that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him" - that is on His Son, the Lamb of God - "the iniquity of us all". Hath made to meet on Him, imputed to Him, reckoned it His, counted it His, by divine imputation. Otherwise justification and forgiveness of sins is an unjust thing. I would humbly, and confidently assert that, that God could not forgive you, nor justify your person, without the merit of obedience rendered and without the virtue of the atonement made. But this obedience is rendered, rendered by Jesus Christ. This atonement is made, made by the blood of the Lord Jesus which He shed for many for the remission of sins, and that is the ground of the non-imputation of sin to the sinner, and of the imputation of righteousness to the ungodly. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." This is a great wonder, that a man, who cannot help himself, a man who only can condemn himself, a man who is condemned by the law of God in his conscience, the man who sees no way of escape, no way of retrieving himself, is brought to realise that his sins were laid upon Jesus Christ by the Father, and the merit of Christ's obedience is laid to his account by that same Father. The doctrine of substitution is one of the most precious, and solemn doctrines that can ever be realised in the heart. There is no heaven without substitution. There is no seeing the face of God with joy by a sinner, apart from the merit, the infinite merit of the obedience of the Lord Jesus and the sufferings of Christ. The blessedness of the man, the man who was cursed in his feelings, the man who possessed his iniquities, who felt the wrath of God, who feared tremblingly every day because of the fury of the oppressor, who expected hell, who knew he deserved it, the man who could not excuse himself, could not find a hiding place; that man made blessed by an act of Jehovah in His grace; freely, fully justifying him through the redemption ~~that~~ is in Christ Jesus.

Now if God accounts righteousness to you, if He reckons righteousness to you, if He imputes righteousness to you - and these

words are all the same in this chapter - then you are a blessed man, and you cannot be other than a cursed man if you die without it; cannot be other than a wretched man if you are born again and lack the knowledge of this. Now if you receive the truths I have uttered, and are convinced of sin, and lack the experience of this blessedness, you may see it afar off and pant for it; you may say - looking upon a child of God who is clothed with the robe of the Saviour's obedience, who has access therefore unto God, and lives before God, and enjoys the peace of God - you, a poor prisoner under guilt, and under the law, and conviction, you may say, that man is a blessed man. O, if I had that blessedness. O, if I might have but the enjoyment of that liberty. O, if these filthy rags were but taken from me, and I might be clothed in a garment in which I might appear before God. Well, if you see the blessedness of it, and have a heart to seek it, the Lord will bestow it upon you. How is it given, communicated? Well, by an act of grace. By an act of grace through the agency of faith. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Now faith being the gift of God created in the heart by the Spirit, has various objects, but God is the ultimate Object of faith, and God in Christ is the immediate Object of faith. And when that immediate Object is revealed, when, that is to say, Immanuel's face appears; when God looks upon you through and in His dear Son, and you see on His countenance no frown, no wrath, but rest, and satisfaction, and a heavenly smile, and divine acceptance, and peace, then your faith embraces Him, receives Him, receives His work, receives His testimony. It is a great thing to know it. It brings peace. "Therefore" - says the Apostle in the 5 chapter of this epistle, this wondrous epistle - "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And this has no relation to the sinner's works; it has no relation, in respect to merit, to any of the works the sinner has accomplished. Run he will to flee from the wrath to come as convinced, but it is not to him that runneth. Work he will, but it is not to him that worketh. Reform his life he must by necessity, by the principle of holiness and of grace, but it is not because of reformation. It is without works done by the sinner. Righteousness imputed, and the sinner justified by divine grace, and that freely. And even ungodly - "To him that worketh not but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness". Not that the man is walking in

*Remember*

ungodliness - God will never justify a man in sin; No, do not you run away with that thought, that you can live in sin, and grace will save you; it proves if you think to do that, that you know nothing of grace, in the power of it - but where a sinner feels himself entangled, and involved in guilt, and in a sinful nature, and cannot help himself, and the Lord comes to that man, and says to him, in effect - Now I freely forgive you for Christ's sake, and give you to perceive that the Lord Jesus, God's dear Son, that holy, innocent, and pure Redeemer, bore - by divine grace imputed to Him - your sins in His Own body, and rendered in His Own infinite Person, rendered obedience unto the law that is infinite in its merit. When, I say, that is brought into your heart, and the Lord gives you to believe that it was done to you, then you will have rest; then you wont boast of your own works; then you will not expect to be saved in any other way than by divine grace. Now this is an experience, this blessedness is to be known. The righteousness is unto all, and it shall be upon all them that believe, and when the Lord gives it to you, brings it into your heart, gives you to perceive the righteous character of this, this forgiveness, it will fill your heart with joy and peace in believing. A peace that passes all understanding. It is like a refuge to the mind, a rest to the soul, a strength to the heart, and the sinner feels a humble confidence, a confidence that his case is right before God, and that, not because he is what he is, but because the Lord Jesus has done what He has done for him, and because He is his Redeemer, and so that Scripture comes to be known in a measure - "Surely, in the Lord, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength". Now this can never be lost. The blessedness, as to the feeling of it, is often lost, the confidence may be often shaken, but the thing itself, the state of justification, and the act of divine imputation to the sinner of this righteousness without works, can never be altered, never be diminished, never be taken back.

Once applied 'tis always on

O may the Lord apply it to you.

AMEN.