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Sermon preached by Mr.T.H.B.Hayler at "Ebenezer" Chapel, Richmond,
18th January 1949

Text:- "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

I Thessalonians 1, v 5,6

Here is a word with much experience in it, and every vessel of mercy will be blessed with a measure of the experience that is in the text, for without it a sinner cannot have his calling and election made sure; and do mark this, sinner, if you live and die without your calling or the calling and election of God's people made manifest in you, you will be lost. No one is taken to heaven in ignorance. The Holy Ghost in His complete work makes it clear in every vessel of mercy before he passes out of time into eternity that he has part and lot in the atonement. God's people die in the Lord. They live in the Lord and that good Spirit forms the Lord Jesus Christ in their souls, the only hope of glory, and this is done as the Spirit ministers the Gospel to the sinner. O what a blessed thing is the Gospel! It contains God's mind and will and method in the great matter of Salvation and He in his infinite mercy brings poor, needy people right into the bonds of the Gospel. They are bound up in it, sheltered in it, made to partake of its fulness, have seasons when they rejoice in it. Now then, do you believe you know the Gospel after that manner? Has it ever reached you? Have you been embraced in it? Has it been meat and drink to your very soul? If it has, then you possess a solemn seal that the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart and one says 'The mark of that celestial seal, can never be erased'. But let us look as the Spirit may help us in some measure into the great and grand words of the text.

First I do feel it imperative to speak a little of how the Holy Ghost works in a sinner's heart to fit him for the reception of the Gospel, and that is a solemn business. You won't want the Gospel until the Holy Ghost fills you with deep need of it and that feeling of deep need means some very solemn, painful dealing of the Holy Ghost in your conscience. You must be acquainted with what a wretch you are and you are a wretch, a devilish wretch, that is the best that can be said of us naturally. People say I am vulgar in talking like that. They may say what they like but a sinner led captive by the devil at his will is a devilish wretch; he is

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alienated from God by wicked works. That is where each one of us is by nature and it is a very sad thing if you think better of yourself. I might have offended you in calling you a devilish wretch but that would not offend you if you have been under the teaching of the Spirit, no not for one minute. Your heart would have said, yes I have felt it, I do feel it, I know it, I groan under it, I want God in His mercy so to deal with me that I may have His own sweet seal that, bad and black and base as I am, the forgiveness that is with Him has reached me. But the manifestation of this is very painful, very humiliating, doubly so when the Spirit makes the devilish wretch feel what he deserves, doubly so. I don't expect ever to forget when God made me to feel that I deserved to be damned and made me fear that I should be damned. Nor will you ever forget it if you have had it. Have you had it? Has the Lord so dealt with you? Have you had to confess 'By my sins deserving hell?' Spiritual people make that confession, people that have been humbled under the mighty hand of God, people who have been brought to judgment by the Holy Ghost in their consciences by the application of His holy law to their souls. They feel it, they confess it and they often beg 'Lord in deserved wrath, remember mercy'.

It is to such people that the Holy Ghost lets down into their consciences the Gospel. First in the word of it. Manifestation of what that Gospel is and what it can do will make that Gospel attractive to you. You will receive the word of it powerfully, you will begin to see a beauty in it, you will find the Spirit creating within you hunger and thirst after it. O, this receiving of the word of the truth of the Gospel is no mean thing. It does not mean receiving it in much assurance and in the Holy Ghost so as to partake of its fulness; that comes later. The Spirit always lifts up Christ, draws the poor sinner to Him, makes Him in all His beauty and power and blessedness the one thing needful, and that is done by manifestation of the truth of the Gospel. Do you remember when you first saw a beauty in the Gospel? I do, I am glad to have these definite things in possession and in my memory. They are great points of the Spirit's dealing. Old Eli Ashdown said that a religion without points was no religion at all, nor is it. What a great point is conviction of sin, the emptying out of all hope in self; and what a great point is the revelation of the Gospel, the discovery to the poor, needy sinner that in the Gospel there is forgiveness with God, the opening up of the fulness of the Gospel, the manifestation in the Gospel that God had raised up a Saviour for poor guilty people, a Saviour who is the sinner's Surety

a Surety who has in covenant taken upon Himself every bit of the sinner's liability. That is something isn't it? I heard a friend say the other day respecting one that we both knew was in trouble, 'O', said he, '(he has got a deep pocket and a loving heart,) tell him I will be responsible for that', and I did tell him with gladness too. Ah poor sinner, when the Spirit whispers in your conscience that Jesus was in covenant responsible for the meeting of your great debt, you will have a little joy of Heaven let down in your soul. How that blessed fact is sweetly and beautifully made known in this couplet 'And for His people Jesus said, He'd bear the punishment instead.' He was responsible. What a debt He was responsible for, the debt of a number which no man can number. Every one of that number was alienated from God by wicked works, born in sin and shapen in iniquity and the Lord Jesus, before they were born, stood Surety for them and when the fulness of the time came He fulfilled His Suretyship to the very letter. The Gospel tells us how He did it, how He came into this lower world, made of a woman, made under the law, to fulfil His Suretyship. It tells us how the Lord laid upon Him, this Surety, the iniquity of all His people, convinces us in the Gospel of how He poured out the wrath due to these base people upon the Son of His love. It unfolds to us His great sufferings, it discloses the sweet and solemn secret of Gethsemane and makes known the glory and power and blessedness of Calvary.

O has the Holy Ghost let down the word of His truth concerning this glorious Surety into your heart and has He made what this Surety did to be very, very important in your conscience? Has He brought you to this conclusion that, unless you have part and lot in what this Surety did, you will be lost? O if you have been brought as far as that won't you beg of the Lord to fill you with assurance in the Holy Ghost that you have part and lot in this Gospel? It is blessed to see a beauty in it so as to desire it, to make you hunger and thirst after possession of it, but do mark this, that is not enough. You must be put in possession of it. You must receive it as the Apostle declares here in power in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. Ah! I can hear some of you saying that is what I want. You can say, Yes, the blessed Gospel, I can see in it all my helpless soul can need, all a gracious God can give, but I want it to be made mine. I want it to be let down into my very heart and made my own possession. And what affliction there is in that poor, tried, longing, earnest, seeking case at times, an afflicted distressed spirit, a spirit tempted by the devil who says That Gospel will never reach

you, it was not set up for you, you have no part or lot in it. Will not that afflict your soul? He feels an afflicted conscience because of what he daily increasingly sees of the working of sin in his own bosom and the devil taking advantage of that and saying, Do you call yourself a Christian? Do you think for one moment that such a wretch as you with all those evil thoughts, all the working of these evil lusts, all that worldly mindedness, can call yourself a Christian? You may look the devil in the face and say 'I never have called myself a Christian, I wish I was, I wish I had the evidence of it.' That will afflict you. O the workings of unbelief and that vile tempter and all the things that do oppose the poor sinner in those measures of right feeling after Christ! That will be affliction. There is no affliction like soul affliction, mark that! Some think that bodily affliction is worse than soul affliction, they think, foolishly. I repeat it, there is no affliction so painful, so distressing, so alarming as soul affliction. You have a day or two of it with scarcely a ray of hope in your soul, feeling that every tick of the clock brings you nearer to damnation, you will know what affliction is, carrying about with you a poor, heavy laden conscience.

Ah, but a word reaches these people in much affliction. I am well persuaded that this does not mean in the first place bodily affliction, it is soul affliction, the distress of mind that every poor, needy, broken seeker after mercy gets from time to time. But the word reaches you, a word from Jesus in the blessed Gospel, a great and grand word like this may come to a poor sinner "Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine." I went into Gethsemane for thee, I hung upon Calvary's tree for thee, thou art mine. O when it reaches an afflicted conscience, enters into that conscience with power, with assurance in the Holy Ghost, then that poor sinner comes into the liberty of the Gospel. Yes he does! But the way to it is through much affliction. O it is not a matter of saying, I believe and therefore it is all right. It is a matter of Jesus coming to you and saying to you "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Whispering this sweet fact into your poor distressed heart 'I loved thee so well, As to lay down My life to redeem thee from hell.' That is what some of you want is not it? O wouldn't you go to bed happy if that sweet seal was let down into your heart? You would lose your load, your guilty fears would be gone, your calling and election would be made sure. You would believe that, as sure as sure can be, one day you will be where Christ is, and join in

that everlasting song and crown Him Lord of all. Well He will do it. O, it is one of the sweetest parts of the ministry to me to tell poor, needy, broken people that the Gospel will reach them, will go right into them, will fill their souls with joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. Believe this, O I do, It makes me say with confidence to you poor, longing sinner,

"The time of love will come,
When we shall clearly see,
Not only that he shed his blood,
But each shall say, "For me."

That will put things right for eternity. We like things put right for time, - sometimes they are for five minutes, aren't they? - never for much longer. There is a satisfaction when things are cleared up naturally, but O the satisfaction for things to be cleared up for eternity in a sinner's bosom. Why, when that is done for you, you will be able in the sweetest of humility to sing with dear Rutherford who said

"O I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved's mine.
He brings a poor, vile sinner
Into His house of wine.
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Note'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

Ah press on, beg on, hope on poor longing sinner. The Lord whom you are seeking will not tarry long, and to Him the weakest is as dear as the strong. Amen

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