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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, Sunday evening, December 29th 1963.

"And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know: that He might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

Deuteronomy 8:3

This morning we made a few references to the second verse; we were inclined to this text because this is the closing service of the year - "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness."

It is profitable to be brought to a stand-still, a pause, from time to time in the midst of the chaotic conditions in which we live. "Be still and know that I am God," said the Lord to David. In the midst of tempestuous motion also, "Though the mountains be carried into the midst of the seas," and Job He told to stand still and consider the wonderful works of God. Here is an exhortation to pause and to consider, to look back and to see whether through the year we have had any tokens for good, any evidences or confirmation to our religion. We go on and if we are not checked we should go to and fro as a door upon its hinges, and one of the most terrible conditions is to be left to Gospel deafness and Gospel hardness. It is possible to become so used to a sound that you cease to hear it. It is very solemn if the divinely appointed preaching of the gospel becomes so ordinary that you cease to hear it, and it becomes ineffectual.

'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God has led thee these forty years,' and so we tried to refer back to the beginning of things. To the beginning of the Lord's dealings with His literal people in bringing them out of Egypt, which was a type of His spiritual dealings with His spiritual Israelites, in bringing them out of the world and separating them, not only from the world, but separating them unto Himself. For when the Lord separates, it is with a separation that unites; and that is one way by which you may know whether the Lord has separated you. To be mere separatists is nothing. There are some people that can change from one opinion to another. Some may even come out of the world by mere religion, but if the Lord has separated us it will also unite us unto Himself and to the truth and to His dear people. Therefore, in looking back, can we trace that the Lord is our God by having thus separated us? Made essential in our experience that commandment, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Almighty." For this was one important part of the law, that they should keep themselves separate from the nations round about them.

Well, if the Lord is our Leader He will lead us through a great waste, howling wilderness, a great and terrible wilderness. We shall need Him in just those most merciful characters He has condescended to assume. We shall need Him to be our Shepherd, to be our Shepherd to feed us, to defend us and to lead us. We shall need Him to be our Pilot in every storm. We shall need Him to be our Refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. They are very simple utterances, declarations of the Word of God, but they are very important if we come to consider whether they are in our experience. Have we, through the year that has passed, needed Him? Sought unto Him for a refuge, a hiding place, to be a helper of the helpless? Have we needed Him to be our Shepherd? Have we needed Him to be our Prophet to teach us? To be our Priest, our great high Priest, to offer Himself for us - His precious blood? Have we needed Him to be our King in all His heavenly sovereignty, both in our soul's experience and also in the pathway of life? It is well to go back and see whether we

have had such needs of the Lord. For it is not just coming, my friends, to hear sermons; the vital thing is soul experience.

We concluded this morning with some of the purposes He had in view in thus leading His people through the wilderness. It was 'To humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.' Not that the Lord needed any information. He only knoweth the hearts of all men; He knoweth our thoughts afar off. But it is to discover ourselves to ourselves; and this is one effect of the wilderness condition. This is one way in which He humbles His people, gives them to realise that they are both debtors to Him naturally and spiritually; that we cannot provide ourselves with a corn of wheat to sow, therefore, not with a crumb of bread, or a drop of water. And so spiritually, we are entirely dependent upon the Holy Ghost for life, for every breath of prayer, for every gleam of in-shining, for any knowledge of the Lord. We are brought to know that we are completely dependent upon Him and, therefore, one great effect of His teaching is to humble us.

I think we said this morning that His dealings with His people do not debase them; nothing of the work of God will debase a person. No! He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the dunghill. But this humbling is very blessed.

*Bless'd are the humble souls that see
Their emptiness and poverty.*

(Gadsby's 1112)

'To prove thee, to know what was in thine heart,' - and this is for our own information. I think we concluded this morning by saying that as the Lord thus leads His people the right way to heaven, there is that double teaching - a teaching us what we are, independent of what He is. I feel that very strongly. There is a hymn that we sing that, when I was a youth, I thought the most ridiculous hymn ever to attempt to sing but I have had to sing it since;

*Make us well our vileness know,
Keep us very, very low.*

(Gadsby's 706)

When the Lord really discovers to us what is in our own heart and what we are, and all that belongs to us personally, it is a sight. Has He done that for you? and humbled you by a real sense and experience of what you are by nature? I say it is a sight. It is real. The Scriptures describe it for us - poor, miserable, wretched, blind, naked, dead, and corrupt.

'To humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.' But then He will prove also who He is and that such a case does magnify His saving grace; and that such an uttermost sinner in all his corruption does honour the infinite fullness of His sin-atonement blood. I will not apologise for repeating what I often say for it is a blessed truth that opposites meet in the gospel, opposites meet in gracious experience; and if they were not opposites, I should be in despair. But He will teach you this in the way He deals with you in this wilderness world - and it will bring us to consider in our hearts that as a man chasteneth his son, so the " Lord thy God" - it is the same one - "The Lord thy God chasteneth thee." He would not chasten thee if He was not the Lord thy God. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Now these things are written that we might prove where we are. Have we that evidence of son-ship by the Lord's merciful correction and chastening as we have passed through the year?

It is a blessed man whom the Lord chasteneth and teacheth him out of His law. For the two things go together, chastening first and then teaching. But He accomplishes His purpose: 'And He humbled thee.' He humbled thee and what does this mean exactly? What Jeremiah describes it to be - "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." Why not? They are of no use to the soul. Have you been taught that in the wilderness journey? It is teaching to profit. Do you believe that if you could be possessed of a very rich estate, it would not make an atom of difference to you as a person? Not a bit; and if you had all the wisdom of the greatest philosopher it would not show you one inch of the way to heaven; and that if you were the most mighty man on earth, as we have seen some of the mighty men, that your breath is but in your nostrils, are but creatures of a day and crushed before a moth. 'He humbled thee.' "But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that He understandeth and knoweth Me." Well now, that is something to glory in - to understand and to know Christ.

Some trembling God-fearing sinner might say - 'To know and to understand Him is beyond me.' It is not! I believe that when that knowledge of Him is experimental it has that double teaching in it. Do not some of you know Him in such a way as a shipwrecked mariner would understand a harbour? Do not some of you know Him as a starving man would know food and understand it? O there is a great deal of knowledge in a good, real need! Don't despise a need, but don't rest on it. Don't be satisfied with it. But if you have a need which is the work of the Holy Ghost in your soul, you will never die until that need is supplied. It is a mercy to have a need, to have a desire kept alive in the soul, and this will humble us. I say again, not debase us. It is a great height of attainment in vital religion to be humbled before God. Sweet it is. Humility is sweet. Humility is filled with love, with a meek and quiet spirit. It is filled with repentance and confession and godly fear. If you have ever experienced spiritual humility for five minutes you will value it.

'And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger.' He intended that you should hunger after a spiritual kind. The people were hungry, literally, naturally, but the design, the teaching here is spiritual. Therefore, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; they shall be filled." 'He suffered thee to hunger.' It was His permission. Do you hunger and thirst for God Himself? This is experience, and I believe the greater sense you have of your sinfulness and of your desperate case, the more will be your hunger and your thirst for God. 'He suffered thee to hunger.' but did not leave them to starve. 'He fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not.' They did not understand the literal manna when they saw it upon the ground, the hidden manna. This is a type of Christ, the bread of life, and it is the hungry soul that is fed in the gospel by and with Christ Himself. This is a very blessed experience, to partake of Christ. 'That He might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' And this is the important part of the text really. 'Man doth not live by bread only,' and bread here represents all the necessities of this life, takes in all the beautiful providence and the wonderful creation of God without which we should soon perish. Have you been humbled under a sense of that? Perhaps in that biting, bitter weather, especially of last year, did you ever feel what a poor perishing creature you were? If comfort, warmth, raiment, food were withheld from you, you would not have much to boast in; poor looking spectacle would be the greatest man if those necessary supplies were withheld from him. That would humble him; and the teaching is spiritually, that man doth not live by providences and creation only. It maintains our body. We are not worthy, it is easy to say, but have you felt it? That we are not worthy of the least of God's good providence; and has your faith ever adored and worshipped Him as you have viewed the bounteous creation in bringing forth the fruits of the earth, especially in harvest time. O the glorious creation! It is wonderful that out of the very earth itself comes everything, without exception, for the body; and everything, without exception, for the soul, comes down from heaven.

I believe I am right in saying that there is nothing that you handle or look upon in this world that does not come from the earth. Whether it is the wood that makes the pews or the woollen clothes that you wear, everything comes from this earth; and it does set forth the glory and majesty and sovereignty of the Creator. Faith rejoices in it. But we shall be taught in the wilderness that man doth not live by these things alone. The Lord bestows these things upon the righteous and the wicked, upon the just and the unjust; and we shall realise this. That is to say, that we shall be taught that we have a soul as well as a body. Everybody knows they have got a body. O the demands that it makes! And the lust of your flesh cries out for satisfaction. But it is not everybody knows they have got a soul. Do you? Are you conscious from day to day that while you need the sustenance for your body, you have a soul which all providence and creation can never reach; can never satisfy.

Well, this is good teaching. Perhaps some of you as you sit in the pew may know it. I can feel, not only believe, but feel the distinction between the good, beautiful providence of God and the blessings of His divine grace in salvation. 'That He might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' Where are those words that proceed out of the Lord's mouth? They are in the Scriptures, and there is sufficient revealed in the Word of God to "thoroughly furnish a man unto all good works." Given by divine inspiration it is and Peter says, "And this is the Word, which by the gospel, is preached unto you."

Now we can perhaps begin to join things together. 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness' - for this purpose, 'to humble thee' in the way that we have tried to trace out. O the exalted position of a humbled sinner at the foot of the throne of grace! The lowest place in the things of God is higher than the highest place in this poor world. Do you believe it? - I believe it and feel it; and you will be thankful to be the least member of Christ's mystical body. So that this is the gospel, 'Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live.'

Peter believed it. There were those who went back and walked no more with Him, for this simple reason, that they did not believe the text. The Lord said, "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God" that is, if you have no union with Him, "there is no life in you." "They went back- and walked no more with Him. The Lord said unto the twelve. Will ye also go away? Peter said, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." He had this teaching. Can some of you say the same? Can some so answer and say, Lord, where can I go? Thou only hast the words of eternal life. Can you from your heart say -"Thou, O Christ, art all I want"

It is a great thing to say, and the Lord will prove what we say. We ought to be able to give a reason for everything we profess and everything we say; and if you cannot give a reason for it, don't say it, don't say it. To say that you are the chief of sinners and can give no reason for it is hypocrisy just as much as if you were to say you are the greatest saint. May we consider and examine ourselves upon everything that we state and profess, as to whether we can give a reason for it. You think of it. If you cannot sleep at a night, just go around your own heart and ask yourself the question as to whether you can give a reason for everything that you have said. It is very blessed to feel a reason.

'By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live.' And this takes in every doctrine of the gospel. Now some of you might begin to say; 'Now I can get a scent of water. Now I can feel there is something for the root off my faith to go after. Now there is something I can feed upon.' and you will feel such a drawing to the doctrines of the gospel, you will live upon it, feed upon it. The doctrine of the Person of Christ will be food to your soul, not a mere doctrine; and to be fed is for the food to go into the inside, and it is for the blessed Spirit to bring Christ in the gospel into your heart, so that He, in His person, is assimilated into your spiritual being in experience. Have you ever

felt that? Difficult it is to express. Christ can be felt, that He is gracious. Can be tasted that His love can be shed abroad in the heart, and it is by these means as the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and brings them into the heart, so that He becomes what He says He is, the bread of life.

'That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word' - and every word of God is pure. It is very sweet to find it as did Jeremiah; "Thy word was found, and I did eat it, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." But you may depend upon it, that if ever you find a word in the Scriptures and eat it, then you have been prepared for that word by some exercise or experience of soul conflict. The Lord gives out handfuls of purposes but He does not throw His blessings about promiscuously, they are too valuable. But has the Lord ever given you a smile through some verse of Scripture? Flourished Himself through the lattices? Has He drawn you after Him? Given you to feel that He is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood? Have you ever sat down under His shadow, under the shadow of His wings? Have you ever sat down under the divinely appointed means of His grace, and the fruit, the fruit of His Person, the fruit and effects of His work, His sufferings, His temptations, His blessed death and resurrection, have been sweet unto your taste?

'Man shall not live by bread alone.' Therefore, says He by Isaiah, "Labour not for the food that perisheth, but for that bread that endureth unto eternal life." and you will feel the difference. Faith will make the distinction in your own soul, and it will put things in their right places in your life. I believe that there is no person that enjoys the things of this life which God has kindly given, like they do who have the grace of God in their hearts. No! Godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

'He humbled thee, suffered thee to hunger, fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know.' They were to gather that manna, not to hoard it up, lest it should breed worms and stink. The Lord does not allow us to hoard up a lot of religion, but what He does give, He gathers. O, how precious it is, when in the midst of the assembly of the saints the Lord Himself comes near and by His Spirit it may be, stands still by a certain person in a certain pew and asks the question 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' Why my friends, when we follow the Lord in the gospels as He went about doing good, we shall see His divinity manifested through His humanity. When He opened those blind men's eyes, it was the human hand that touched those eyes, but it was His divine power that healed them; and you will live upon that Christ. You will say, I must have Him; and when you see Him casting out devils, healing the withered hand, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, you will say 'that is just me, Lord.' You will take your leprosy, your withered state, the blindness unto Him, and ask Him to do for you in your soul what He did for those in their bodies.

Are we warranted to interchange His miracles upon the body to blessings in the soul? Yes, we have a warrant for it. They brought to Him a man with a palsy and the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" He said unto them, "Whether is easier to say, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee, or Take up thy bed and walk." There was the body, there was the soul. "But that ye may know that the Son of God hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith unto the sick of the palsy" - not, thy sins are forgiven thee, but "take up thy bed and walk." He reversed it both times. O then poor sinner, in a wilderness world, take to Him your body, take to Him your soul and all the difficulties and perplexities and cares of a wilderness world and ask Him to perform all things for you and He will manage all things by the way and to the end!

Amen.