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Sermon preached by Mr.F.L.Gosden at Galeed, Brighton,
on Lord's day morning, November 5th 1961

"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine."

Ezekiel 16:8

That wonderful chapter that we read (Eph.2) gives a description of the completing of salvation: "You hath He quickened" etc., and goes on to show the unsearchable riches of Christ in salvation, until it arrives at that blessed point: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers." And for substance we have the whole of that same chapter in this text, indeed the whole of revealed truth in salvation throughout the Word of God. To be dead in trespasses and in sins refers back to the Fall of Adam. That 3rd chapter of Genesis is very solemn. It shows us the entrance of sin. It shows us the terrible source of all the woe that the world has ever seen. The Lord came into the Garden of Eden at the cool of the day and called unto Adam; and Adam, created in the image of God, in his created innocence and sinlessness, was fit for and capable of immediate communion with his Creator. But when he fell, O that poor being, sinless in the image of God! Sin rushed, as it were, through every vein, spread its poison to his heart, deformed him, and abased that sacred image, and replaced that image with the image of the devil. And yet therefore the Lord came. Adam was the first sinner and the first saint. The Lord called to him; He did not let him go: "Adam, where art thou?" There he stood exposed to divine wrath, having received the commandment in creation from God: "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die," expecting immediate death, naked and undone. And it is as though the Lord looked upon Adam, and said: "Adam, where art thou? Where is that blessed image? Look at thy deformity, thy ruin, the filth of sin that fills thee." Yet the Lord made a provision for him from the skins of beasts, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. So in this text we have all that is requisite unto salvation. But the great thing is as to whether we are inside of it. I think we may have emphasized that first word in the 2nd Ephesians before: "**You** hath He quickened that were dead." I have felt sometimes as though the divine finger of God, in His infinite love and grace, points to every sinner who was given to Him, and that declaration must reach every such favoured sinner: "And **you** hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Well, that sin has entered into the world; we have indubitable and solemn evidence from day to day; but we need a different evidence from a general recognition of the effects of sin. We need to be convinced of sin in our consciences by the law of God: "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20) And the knowledge of sin is essential in experience. We shall never know salvation unless we know what sin is. We shall never need the Gospel, for that is a refuge for sinners.

"Now when I passed by thee." Strictly the first recognition – as this expresses the first recognition of God with respect to His people – was in the eternal covenant. The electing love of the Father chose a people, as it is in the 1st Ephesians, that everything in salvation proceeds according to the divine rule: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (v.4) And therefore says the Lord Jesus in the majestic chapter, 8th Proverbs, concerning His eternal Person: "My delights were with the sons of men". (v.31) That is when He first saw His people, in the

sovereign electing love of the Father, and therefore everyone of those, without exception, will come under this gracious dealing, that those whom the Father foreknew He also did predestinate, and whom He predestinated them He also called.

And that calling is expressed in this: "When I passed by thee." It is a special passing by. The time is set, appointed by divine sovereignty. It would be a mercy if this should be the day concerning but one poor sinner; that this should be made true: "When I passed by thee." You see, in this passing by, He stood still, as He did with the blind man who, when he knew it was Jesus passing by, cried out. And the more they attempted to check him, he cried so much the more. But when Jesus, who was passing by, came where he was, He stood still. And so in this text: "When I passed by thee, I looked upon thee." This is a very special passing by. Ah, I have sometimes prayed, as I have anticipated a service, my eye has gone along the different pews, and there are some laid upon the mind. What a mercy it would be if the Lord, by His Spirit, would come and grant a special passing by, and a looking upon some sinner, and saying with respect to that soul, as He does with respect to Zion: "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

The condition of the character here is in the 6th verse: "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." This sets forth the depravity of nature, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, perishing as a newborn infant cast out and abandoned in a field in its blood. O my friends, if the Holy Spirit should open to us the real depravity of sin in our nature, in which we are born, it would give us to realize that nothing but the full, rich, everlasting Gospel, filled with the virtue of the Person and the work of Christ, could ever reach our case. It is a mercy to be made a sinner. We are all sinners, but a mercy to be made a sinner experimentally. If the Lord has taught me anything, I believe He has taught me that. We are depraved throughout. Our whole being is impregnated with sin, we are poisoned to death, we are corrupt, we have in our loins a loathsome disease; from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet are naught but bruises and putrefying sores. Do you believe it? Have you ever been brought to that state of leprosy incurable? O how precious it makes the Gospel! how great the love of God in Christ! "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15)

"Now when I passed by thee." The Lord has different methods in passing by His people in order to accomplish the purposes of His grace. But one main method He has appointed is the preaching of the Gospel; and it would be a mercy if He would pass by, in the preaching of the Gospel this day, because when He comes, He comes as the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite were of no use to the poor man, but when the good Samaritan came and passed by, he looked upon him and poured in the oil and the wine, lifted him up upon his own beast, and took him into an inn, and gave instructions to the keeper of the inn to take care of him. Now that is how He deals with sinners.

"Now when I passed by thee, I looked upon thee." Not an ordinary look – a divine look. O that we, by the Spirit, possessed that faith to believe in Christ, that we may know Him! To know Him by His looking, to know Him by His passing by, to know Him by His divine touch, to know Him by the application of His sin-atoning blood. "Looked upon thee." When the Lord Jesus looks upon a sinner, He looks into him with all the merit and efficacy of His own divine grace and mercy. He looks life

into death; He looks light divine into darkness. David prayed for this look: "Look Thou upon me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name." (Psalm 119:132) There is no look, no eyes like those of the exalted Redeemer, for He has with Him the authority, not only of His divine and eternal Person, but of the work that He has accomplished, the plenteous redemption that is in His blood. Therefore when He looks, He conveys the benefit and virtue of all that He has. None can look upon a poor sinner like that. Therefore the effect of His looking upon a poor sinner is the sinner looking unto Him; and so we read that when the Lord Jesus shall come again "unto them that look for Him He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:28) And I will say, because I feel the truth of it, that if you by the Spirit are looking for the Lord Jesus, if as you read His Word with anxiety under a sense of your need as a sinner, together with faith in those treasures of riches that are hidden in the Scriptures, if you are looking for Him in whom all the fulness is, it is an evidence that He is passing by you, and looking upon you. I believe that vital godliness in experience is reciprocal. What comes from heaven to the soul, goes back in the response of faith.

"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee." What a sight! "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6) He did not fail when He looked upon His people, when He saw them polluted in their blood. When Adam fell, and the human race in him, this did not, could not, divert the flow of the river of divine and immutable love. The Lord did not say: "I will have nothing more to do with the human race. I created him in sinless righteousness and innocence, gave him everything that could make him happy; I will have nothing more to do with them. I have angels in heaven, I will be content with angelic nature." No, angels could not separate the love of God from His people.

"When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee." Has He ever looked upon us? You look at some of the characters in the Word of God. Saul of Tarsus, when he stood and held the clothes of those men that stoned blessed Stephen, who would have thought that he was predestinated to be the greatest Apostle, to write that beautiful 3rd Philippians? God looked upon him, passed by him very solemnly, when a light shined above the brightness of the sun, and brought him down to the ground. Yes, my friends, if we are under divine teaching, we shall be brought down to the very dust. And then, and then only, should we know the blessedness of that experience: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Samuel 2:8) O what a passing by, and a looking upon, was that! To translate a poor sinner from the dust and the dunghill, and to make him inherit the throne of glory!

"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee." The Lord knoweth them that are His. He never makes a mistake. "There shall not an hoof be left behind." (Exodus 10:26) "Of all which the Father hath given Me, I shall lose nothing." (John 6:39) For substance this experience will, in a lesser or greater degree, be known by all who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Was there ever a time in your experience when the Lord looked upon you? The first in-shining of life is very solemn, for He looks upon His people in His holy law, and it is that which discovers to them what they are. But with respect to His people, the action of the law has a different end from what it has in the wicked. But there is the sentence of death through the law in the heart of a sinner to this end, that he should not trust in himself, but in God who raiseth the dead. Therefore in their experience eventually the law is made a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. And O when thus there is brought before a poor, deformed, depraved sinner the glory, the beauty, the love, the mercy, the

grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the look of divine love that brings into the soul all the benefits of the Gospel, what a look it is! "He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." (Psalm 102:19,20) And so the church in Isaiah's days prays: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?" (ch.63:15) So in the subsequent experience, when a poor sinner is brought again to walk in darkness, living faith will respond to this looking of the Lord Jesus: "Look down from heaven, from the height of Thy sanctuary." No other look. Have not some of you felt that, as you are in the midst of the wilderness, in the midst of the changing scenes of life, together with a body of sin and death – all the conflicts of soul, and all the griefs and anxieties of this life – there has been at times a looking up unto the Lord? "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." (Psalm 5:3)

"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love." It does not say: "Thy time was a time of love," but it was **the** time of love, prepared in the covenant of grace. "His going forth is prepared as the morning." (Hosea 6:3) The goings forth of the Lord Jesus by His Spirit for the salvation of His people are prepared as the morning. Who keeps the sun punctual? What confusion there would be if any of the works of God – if the sun could deviate a millionth part of a second! His glory is to be seen in creation; created perfection is there. And shall there be less order and punctuality in the things of greater importance? So His goings forth for the salvation of His people are prepared, and the day, the year will come. I am sure it is true that we sing for the comfort of seeking souls:

The time of love will come,
When we shall clearly see,
Not only that He shed His blood,
But each shall say, "*For me.*" (Gadsby's 330)

Thy time was the appointed time of love.

Then it will be discovered to a poor sinner, the completeness that is in Christ, in which he stands. You take this text, and what the Lord declares by Isaiah, and see what a beautiful harmony there is: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." (ch.43:1) And so He concludes in this text: "Thou becamest Mine." O this blessed people! He shows here what love it is: "And I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness." Of course, we shall be brought to nakedness, "stripped of all our fancied meetness." The Apostle Paul was stripped of all his Pharisaism, all works of the flesh. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that faith not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

"And I spread My skirt over thee." This sets forth the righteousness of the Lord Jesus; and you remember in the case of Ruth, how Boaz spread his skirt over her. This is the Lord Jesus betrothing His people unto Himself. In this time state He engages them to marry. The marriage will be in heaven, the marriage supper of the Lamb there. But He betroths His people here, as in Hosea: "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgement,

and in loving kindness, and in mercies." (ch.2:19) For all the works of salvation, and the work of grace, and the graces of the Spirit, are all imperishable, immutable, and eternal.

"And I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness." Legality is so closely united to us, that it is one of the hardest things to be naked before God, to come before Him stripped and bare, to have nothing in our hands. It is the deception of general religion that we must do something. I know that there will be works, the works of faith; but my friends, we will have to learn that without Him we can do nothing. There is nothing in our nature that can do anything but sin, and left to ourselves, we should damn ourselves to the last creature. O the blessedness of grace, that in the fulness of grace it pleased the Father to dwell there – everything without exception – and that the Lord Jesus Himself not only does everything, but He has accomplished and finished the whole work of salvation! Therefore the Holy Ghost works in the soul that salvation that Christ has wrought out.

"I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee." This is repeated by the Apostle to the Hebrews. "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee," it says here; and there: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things," etc. (Hebrews 9:17-20) That is the covenant of grace. It is made between the eternal, glorious Trinity on behalf of the election of grace. He does not make this covenant with His people; He makes it over to them. It is made on their ground. The first covenant in creation was made with man: "Obey and live; disobey and die." But the covenant of grace is a unilateral covenant, and O the security of it! Have you ever been thankful it is a covenant made with David's Lord and ours? A covenant all through grace; an unconditional covenant; and that covenant secures those that are in it unto eternal salvation and to eternal glory.

"Yea, I swear unto thee...and thou becamest Mine." I can speak but little of these tremendous sacred truths. "Thou becamest Mine." "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." (Isaiah 43:21) O that the Lord would even pass by, through His own appointed means, through this congregation, look upon some poor sinner, spread His skirt of righteousness over them, make known His covenant, and declare that they are His! "I will be your God, and ye shall be My people." (Jeremiah 7:23)

Amen.