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SERMON BY MR. F.L. GOSDEN
at "Galeed" Chapel, Brighton,
on Wednesday, 12th October, 1960

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Text: Lams. 3 vs. 22-24.

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The Holy Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and what infinite wisdom and goodness is revealed also in this consideration. If one had never heard of the Bible, had never seen one - and I understand that our dear departed friend when she was a child, in her home there was no Bible at all. But if one unacquainted with the Scriptures were given to understand that there was a people upon this earth who belong to the great God, children of the heavenly King, and then this person wished to know how they were led through this world to heaven, how surprised they would be to see where these favoured people were brought into. They are the seed royal, and yet you follow them through the Scriptures and see the places in which they are found. And even in this chapter itself, here is Jeremiah, a prophet of the Lord, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath", and the first eighteen verses is a lamentation indeed from his own experience; and each in our measure will know something of this pathway if we are in the footsteps of the flock. "He hath led me and brought me into darkness" - this Lord, He led me, "brought me into darkness and not into light". There is something about these opening verses that are very precious to me. In my similar measure I believe that I know something about them, and there is teaching to profit in it. "Surely against me is He turned; my flesh and my skin hath He made ^{old} whole; He hath broken my bones." This is that merciful God. "Also, when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer." Jeremiah would understand Job's pathway, and Job's wife would have told Jeremiah the same as she told Job, "I should curse that God and die, I shouldn't put up with that." "He was unto me as a bear lying in wait; He hath bent His bow and set me up as a mark for His arrow; I was a derision to all my people; He hath filled me with bitterness; He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones and hath covered me with ashes; And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. And I said, 'My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord'". Do you know anything about it? This is the pathway, this is where the Lord teaches His people. Hezekiah said, "By these things men live." They do when they have living faith, and here in these verses is the trial of faith, the test of faith. But the remarkable thing about it is this - "Remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath ^{them} still in remembrance." And you would expect him to say, "and I am in despair." No, "My soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me." It reminds us a little of what we were considering lately, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause and execute judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light and I shall

behold His righteousness." These are the mercies of the Lord which are with them that fear Him. O, see the love of God exerting itself! See the mystery of how these dealings of God with the soul draw the soul to Him! See the sinner flee for refuge to the hope set before him! Look at Jonah, "When my heart fainted within me I remembered the Lord." This is the way. Is there anything in your soul which answers to it? And the Lord makes Himself known in these tempests, in this warfare. "Remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me." Perhaps, some of you can visualise as you look back to some spots and places when you thought you would sink to rise no more. The Lord brings His people into the belly of hell. Brings them right to the very ends of the earth, to the end of themselves, to the end of their religion, to the end of their praying, to the end of their chapel-going, and then He speaks. I believe that my soul has something still in remembrance and is humbled in me. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed." And in the first place, Jeremiah here is looking back on that record that he gives us of those afflictions, misery, wormwood and gall, and he sees the mercies of the Lord in it. And if I was left to myself 50 years ago, I might have thought then that I had opportunity to do as I liked. But I have had to walk in a great measure through these eighteen verses and looking back, seeing how the Lord has inclosed my ways with hewn stone and made my paths crooked, I can look back and say that was mercy, wisdom. Wisdom and goodness, the judgments of God. And therefore it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. And the thing is, it is because of whose mercies they are. It is the Lord's mercies. There are human mercies and we should exercise bowels of mercies to our fellow-men. But human mercy is very helpless. Human compassion is very helpless. There is something very poignant to see a mother looking upon an afflicted and dying child. Very helpless. But the mercy of the Lord is joined with power. It is infinite mercy, omnipotent mercy, immutable mercy, mercy which reaches unto the clouds, the Lord's mercy. O, my friends, who can express the wonder of being united unto the Lord Jesus so that nothing can separate us from His love! All these things recorded in the early part of this chapter, none of them separated Jeremiah from the faithful, immutable love of God. But we shall have to prove in experience the truth. We shall never know the truth [^] by merely reading it in the Word of God - we must walk it out. And so much as we know by experience, so much belongs to us and no more. So it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. His mercies take two parts. Providential mercies and His mercies in grace - the upper and the nether springs. Divine sovereignty orders all things, controls the wicked and all events in this world, and the providence of the Lord's people, although for the most part they are led into a path of tribulation and sorrow, the difference is that all the providences

of the Lord's people wherever it takes them is under the control of the covenant of grace which is ordered in all things concerning them in their ~~lives~~ life's minutest circumstance, the covenant mercy of God orders, permits, controls and guides His people the right way to heaven, and this was the right way for Jeremiah. "O", he says, "it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." What would consume us? Speaking for myself, I should have consumed myself long ago. Sin, O, the power, the recklessness of sin, like a burning furnace in our very being!" Sin would have consumed us. The world would have consumed us, but for the mercy of God. Like a whirlpool it is sucking down its thousands and millions into perdition, and who is making us to differ but the mercy of the Lord? The world would have consumed us but for His mercy. Our troubles would have consumed us. Trouble drives graceless people away from God. O, how many have been driven away from God, both profane and religious people! What a test it is! There comes a breaking point to all natural religion that has no root to it. It will stand some more, some less, but you may depend upon it a natural religion has a breaking point, as the Lord pointed out to His disciples, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him". From that time, from that event, from that circumstance. Sometimes we see one who has promised well, met with a young man or a young woman; from that time they walk no more with them and they go back. Or there may be an unexpected wave of prosperity and that would prove a breaking point of religion - they throw it all to the wind. Many, many things come to test, to see whether there is a living root of faith in the soul. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Are not you compelled with gratitude to say so when you look back? Are not you a wonder to yourself? Do you go by a prison and look at that place and say, "It is of the Lord's mercies I am not there?" "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed because His compassions fail not; they are new every morning." And so David sings, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." O, that we had eyes to see and hearts to understand and faith to believe in that great omnipotent God! Other things would not affect us like they do. He sits upon the circle of the earth. I thought this morning, I think we mentioned it, the sun shining, all the wise ~~men~~ of this world, the great men of the earth running to and fro, meeting one another in conference as though they were the Creator of all things. And yet how impotent they are! They can neither command the sun to rise nor can they cloud it. "O, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning." And not only the natural morning, but a spiritual morning. Some of you may be in darkness. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon His God." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh

in the morning". And we sing sometimes, "It is midnight with my soul till He, bright Morning Star, bids darkness flee", and that will be the morning, and I believe that is just what David meant in our reading. "I had fainted". His enemies were lively and strong, constantly pursued by Saul, compelled to flee from Absalom. "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," As though he would say, "I believe I shall see it, I shall see His goodness, and therefore I shall not faint." And from that experience he could exhort the people of God, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He will strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." "Because His compassions fail not." Because He does not fail. I do, we do, He does not. O, what a God He is! This is the only way that Jeremiah or anybody else is brought through the wilderness world. And there is something very precious in this vale of conflict and sorrow, where we are often given the wine of astonishment to drink and shown hard things. You take it all out of your life. You take such a path and such an experience out of the Word of God. Where would be the Psalms? What would be left? Haven't you ever had it right out of your heart, when the Lord has mercifully granted you a reviving, brought you up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, you have been able to say, "The Lord is precious to my soul, my transport and my trust?" "They are new every morning." Of course, this we have illustrated in creation and providence. How fresh is the morning, the early dew, the early sunshine, birds renew their singing! There is a wonderful ~~energy~~ analogy between the works of creation and the works of grace. And it is intentional. "They are new every morning, great is His faithfulness." And the faithfulness of God is based upon His infinite Being. That is the greatness of His faithfulness, and that faithfulness is the basis of the whole of His works in salvation. And so the Apostle says to Timothy, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." A faithful God. O, faith will hang upon divine faithfulness and its immutability, even in the belly of hell. I am sure that Jonah did. He said, "I remembered the Lord." He was cast out of His sight, he was there through his own sin, his own rebellion and disappointment, but his faith ~~did~~ did not ~~fail~~ die. "I remembered the Lord." He was under no sweet influence of the experience of His smile and presence, he was in complete darkness. The Lord was absent, he was suffering under soul destitution. Do you know what ^{it} is, and yet for something at the very bottom to say, "I remembered the Lord?" He is immutable, nothing can change Him. He is Omnipotent. He can, if He will, deliver. He is Omnipresent, He is where I am. He is Omniscient, He see us when we see ^{not} Him. "I will remember it." This is the way that faith walks through the wilderness. "They are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness." The Lord is faithful in the first place to Himself. And it is a wonderful thing that he ~~may~~ can be faithful to Himself and yet save a sinner. According to the reckoning of carnal reason, it would /appear.....

that He must be either unfaithful to Himself to be faithful to a sinner, or that a sinner must be lost in order that the Lord might be faithful. But such is the Covenant of grace and that means which the Lord has appointed to redeem His people, that He is a just God and a Saviour. A wonderful thing! You may feel at times looking at yourself that it is impossible - you can understand a just God and a destroyer, but a just God and a Saviour - O, the gospel itself! And His divine faithfulness is also to the covenant undertakings. He undertook the responsibility of those who were given to Him by His Father. He was willing to redeem them, willing to pay the full price. Willing to endure the cross, sufferings, ignominy, and shame. Willing to become poor, He Who was infinitely rich. Willing to be made sin, He Who knew no sin, and He was faithful. He was faithful to the law of God. He gave to the law infinite satisfaction. There is not a jot or tittle of the law left unfulfilled. And the mercy of the Lord contains this, divine satisfaction to the law, it is just mercy, it is just faithfulness. O, it does suit sinners, the chief of sinners! And what is such a comfort is this, that we have to look outside ourselves for all righteousness, all worthiness, all life. We shall find nothing in ourselves. And yet again all that we ~~xxxxxx~~ look for in Christ Jesus is to be brought to us. "O, sacred union, firm and strong"! Union to the Lord Jesus is the most vital thing. And therefore we should continually examine ourselves for evidences of union unto God in Christ, such a vital union as is the head to the body, the branch to the vine. Such a union as the members derive all from His fulness, all life and grace, all light and righteousness, all holiness and worthiness. Well, this is all in the mercies of the Lord. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." It just comes into the mind that if anything would cause the Lord's compassions to fail, it must be myself, the chief of sinners. You look at that wonderful Scripture in Ezekiel - it so often presents itself to our mind - "His compassions fail not" - "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 swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning; great is His faithfulness." O, how poor it does make this world! And isn't it sweet when this gospel, this salvation, eclipses the world, so that you can look at your providences and be made willing for the Lord to choose your inheritance for you? Look at all things in this life and say, "Give me Thy gospel and Thy grace, and with respect to everything else, "Thy will be done". "They are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness." And this Lord is my portion, my soul says so. What a mercy it is to have a living soul that speaks! Have you a soul that speaks? If you have a living soul wherein is living faith, it will speak and it will argue, but it will always argue for God. And in the deeps, when deep

callesth unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, that faith will live and speak. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" There is every reason why it should be, if you trace the history from which that blessed Psalm was ~~taken~~ drawn. But, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God." There is more ground for hope in God than there is for despair in yourself, or in the world, or in your circumstances. Blessed faith sees God, and "When she's lifted up the highest, she sings of none but Christ." "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul". O, it is the soul! Through the Psalms David continually speaks of his soul; little about his body. Little about the concerns of his earthly kingdom. Well, when you consider these things, indeed, it makes me ashamed. What an exercised soul we have here! More concerned about his soul than his body - are we? Our business, yes - and mark this, we should be diligent in business. Carelessness is not inculcated in any way in the Word of God, but diligence. But O, my friends, we need fervency of spirit while we are diligent in business. And it is very precious when you feel perhaps, up to your very chin in perplexities of family and business, yet to feel the mysterious inward life in your soul by which you walk with God in the deeps, in your impossibilities, in all your perplexities and conflicts. "Saith my soul". That is the thing. O, there is something so sweet about an inward experience of the kingdom, the authority of grace, the preciousness of Christ when it enters into your sorrows, and we shall meet with them. Yes, ~~it~~^{this} is a vale of tears, but the pilgrims ~~they~~ made the valley of Baca a well. And that illustrates faith in the midst of this valley and all its sorrows, temptations, and cares, digs a well, prayer; faith dig. Have you ever been in deep and heavy sorrow, or laid upon a bed of affliction, and the Lord mercifully exercised your soul and enabled you to dig by prayer, and you made a well and drew up from that exercise living water? "Spring up, O well!" Brings a little of the water of the Well of Bethelhem into your soul." "The Lord is my portion, my soul saith so." And it is your soul that matters. It is sweet to take your soul into the business, take your soul into the midst of your difficulties. Sometimes you will prove the line of a hymn concerning that faith - it laughs at impossibilities and says, "It shall be done." That prayer of faith which forces a passage through iron bars and brazen gates. Know what it is? "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul". But it means this, it will mean a sacrifice. "Gather my sinners unto Me, ^{SANCTI} those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Yes, you may be brought to a point where you will have to sacrifice something for this Portion. It is as though Jeremiah would say, "I pass by every other alluring thing, pass by every other advantage." There may be some prospect in life which would give a great advantage to the detriment of your soul, O, but Jeremiah says, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." And that will give godliness with contentment which is great gain. In 1922 I could have taken a very prosperous business in a part

of the country where there was no truth, no preaching, and it was at that time when I was heavily exercised about my soul and the ministry, and I was compelled to come to this, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul". It might mean a sacrifice. But if He is precious, you will be made willing. And what a portion He is, an eternal Portion, a spiritual ~~part~~ Portion, a living Portion, and a Portion that you will take with you when you die. Every other portion you must leave behind, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" And there will be a reckoning of faith in that particular. Do *f* some of you long for salvation? Do some of you long for grace - O, that you had grace in your heart? Well, the Lord alone can satisfy that longing soul - He has promised to do so. I believe, although I have a deceitful heart, that if I could be possessed of an ^{indubitable} ~~indubitable~~ evidence of being complete in Christ, I would willingly prefer that than possess the whole of Brighton. It is a dead-looking lot, the whole of Brighton, dark, dead lot. O, a view of the King in His beauty, just a little taste that the Lord is gracious will ~~me~~ put the world beneath your feet, and you will rejoice with Jeremiah, "The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul." Therefore will I hope in Him." I will leave every other object. There is no other hope, "All other ground is sinking sand." But what a sufficiency is there - an all-sufficient God for your Portion. For Him to be your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, your Friend, your ~~xxxxxx~~ Elder Brother, your great High Priest, your Redeemer, your Mediator, your Forerunner for you entered into heaven itself. What a portion! What a rich person who belongs to Christ! Paul says, "All things are theirs", and so it is. And if we possessed the world and were destitute of Christ, we are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked. Do you believe it? Do you feel it? O, it is great to feel Christ is precious in the need of Him. I feel that it is no small experience to feel a need of Christ. Some of you may feel that, and to your apprehension have no evidence that you possess Him at all. Perhaps you feel you never will, but with your need of Him, is there something about *f* that need that connects you with His fulness? There is knowledge in need, there is life in need, but you cannot live on it. And the proof that your need is of the Spirit will be this, that you will never be satisfied *f* until that need is supplied from the fulness of His grace, and in that need there is a hunger and thirst for the living God. O, may the Lord make this chapter a comfort to troubled people. May they be brought to rejoice with Jeremiah and say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed, because His compassions fail not. The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him."