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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
Sunday morning, 12th May 1968.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits".

Psalm 103. v.2

This Psalm is a meditation, it is not addressed to anybody, and that is one beautiful feature of the Psalms. They mostly commence abruptly, different from the Epistles. The Epistles are addressed to churches, but this is a meditation, a dialogue as it were between David and his soul, and that is a point of experience. Do we find at times that there is a meditation with our own soul? It is an evidence of living faith. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.

A mercy it is to know that we have a soul. We know that we have a body by its demands. The body is making demands all the day long. Our natural life demands air to breathe, food to sustain it, water to quench the thirst. Do we know that we have a soul, and are there demands from that soul, a living soul? It is very significant, what the Lord said: "Man shall not live by bread alone", and that 'bread alone' intends the things of this life necessary to the body. But we cannot live, that is to say if we are new creatures, we cannot live by bread alone, because we have a soul, that needs heavenly food, that needs heavenly wisdom.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul". This Psalm is very similar to the 34th Psalm. There the Psalmist said: "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof and be glad, O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together". A very significant experience I feel that to be; "O magnify the Lord". He is impossible of increase, but to magnify a thing is to put a magnifying glass upon it to bring out the details, but it does not enlarge the thing itself. Faith is that magnifying glass. O when the Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus in all His infinite fulness and His divine grace and His mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting, His divine compassion, reveals the merits of His sin-atonement blood, and these things are magnified, not enlarged, but the Holy Ghost so reveals them as to bring into the soul the beauty and the power and benefits of them. "O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together".

"Bless the Lord, O my soul". There is the Object. He is the Object of worship, to Whom should be ascribed all honour and glory and all blessing. "Whom have I in heaven", says David, "but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". It is a very great experience, and that is the aim of the Psalmist in the 34th and in the Psalm, and we do well to consider when we read the Word of God as to whether we have any evidence within of like precious faith. I wonder how many of us could say - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee"? Very great profession of faith, very blessed. You might perhaps be brought there once in your life. I believe I was once, once. But here David is aiming at that. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

It is soul work. There is nothing of the flesh here, nothing of the creature, but it is the inward exercise of faith, it is the life of God in the soul struggling toward God; and at the conclusion of this Psalm, we read this: "Bless the Lord all His works, and in all places of His dominion, bless the Lord O my soul". So that we would, as enabled, trace and speak of the benefits of the Lord in all places of His dominion; and there are three main dominions where He works. There is the dominion of creation, and that of divine providence, and the dominion of grace. O what a subject this is, who is sufficient for it? and yet David traces the whole of these three dominions up unto the Lord Himself. He is all and in all. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

There is then, the benefit of His creation. Beautiful description in the 1st Genesis. O may our dear young people ever cleave to the divine inspiration of the Word of God. Modern scholars, they criticise the 1st Genesis and bring forward that false theory of evolution; O may you be given to resist it, reject it and refute it. It derogates from the glory of God and O the ignorance that it displays, it shows that human wisdom, unless there is grace, always departs from the Lord and from His truth. There is a majesty in the creation of the world. "In the beginning God created", and Solomon at the conclusion of that wonderful Book of Ecclesiastes says, "Remember now Thy Creator in the days of thy youth". We are His creatures, and look at His works in creation, how different they are from the works of men. All the works of God in creation are living, and what they were when He first created them they continue, there is no change, there are no fashions in creation and it is a great support to faith. I believe I have felt it to be so especially years ago. It has upon it a stamp of immutability, it declares the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator.

O His wonderful works, the fields, the fruit trees, bringing forth fruit for man and beast. It brings forth sufficient for the whole population of the world, and therefore, He is to be remembered. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not" all the benefits of His wonderful works in creation, and this will be a point here too, that it will be given us if we see things rightly, given us to see our absolute dependence upon the Creator. We cannot produce a corn of wheat, we cannot produce a drop of water. It is no small consideration. If men generally considered this they would be truly humbled. O the pride of men that rises up against God and would cut His sacred Word to pieces, like Jehoiakim cut it with a penknife and threw it in the fire and thought that he would have destroyed the judgements of God that were threatened by the Lord. Commanded Barak to write another Book. The Lord did not forget what was in the first one. He wrote another Book and added to those judgements others. So modern atheists and scholars will prove that they cannot destroy the Word of God, but unless grace prevent it they will prove that the Word of God will be their destruction.

"Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits" then, in creation, and how sovereignly they are brought forth. How sovereignly the rains come from heaven; we cannot command it, we cannot restrain it. How beautiful the sun, the heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth His handiwork. "Bless the Lord O my soul" and forget not all His benefits in creation, that maintain us in life, in being and in well being. O it is beautiful to consider the majesty of God in His works, yet the whole of creation cannot reach our souls, can reach our bodies, not our souls.

Then take again the benefits of the Lord in His wonderful providence. "The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord". O how helpless we are, we know not what a day may bring forth; but the Lord knows the end from the beginning, His sovereignty has appointed everything that concerns the world, but in a very special way concerning His people. His people's pathway through the wilderness is a pathway of tribulation and trial, afflictions, losses and crosses. But the difference is that all those changing scenes and that mixed cup is under the control of the covenant of grace. All the providences of the Lord's people are in the covenant, and for that reason as I view it, David was able to say, "I will bless the Lord at all times", the worst of times, most trying of times, in the greatest of sorrows, in the belly of hell, in the low dungeon: "I will bless the Lord at all times", and by that experience he exhorts the people, "Trust in Him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before Him, the Lord is a Refuge for us". "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits". O His wonderful providences! His providence has this in it for His people "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price". Love is inscribed

upon all their afflictions, you see; as that beautiful Psalm ends that we were reading: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all, (out of all their troubles), the righteous cry and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles". Therefore they are led forth in such a pathway as to teach them to profit, they are lessons that we learn that cannot be learned in any other way but by experience. You could sit down and read a book on christianity, on godliness, you can read the best authors, and if the Lord blesses it, it will be made profitable, but there is a teaching and instruction which can only be had by experience. Some of you know it, and the experience too, will fulfil and interpret the Word of God. Take for instance that Word in Isaiah: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee". How are you going to know it except you pass through waters and through fire, so that it is a wonderful thing to bless the Lord for the benefits of affliction, of adversity, of trial. O there is wisdom in it, it is a right way to a city of habitation,

You see the benefits of the Lord as recorded in the 107th Psalm. You look at the places that people were brought to, the conditions, to stagger to and fro like a drunken man and are at their wits end. To be brought into darkness and the shadow of death, to be bound with affliction and iron, and yet upon every case it came to this: "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men". So David, he concludes that long 119th Psalm, "I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, Thy law is my delight, let my soul live and let Thy judgements help me", wonderful words I feel. You could understand if he said, let Thy mercies help me, but "Let Thy judgements help me", so manifest Thyself and Thy love in chastenings, in afflictions that I might receive teaching to profit.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits", and can not some of you come as far as we have been this morning, have you not been able to bless the Lord? "Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge", declare His faithfulness, His sovereignty and His power, and have not some of you been able to bless the Lord in His providence and confess, it is of the Lord's mercies that I have not been consumed because His compassions fail not, they are new every morning. Well, what a blessed thing it is to have a soul like this. These are the things in the soul that do bless the Lord. "All that is within me, bless His holy name".

But then, we would come to the dominion of His grace. The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens and His wisdom ruleth over all". The first benefit that David mentions in the way of grace is forgiveness. "Forget not all His benefits; Who forgiveth all thy iniquities". It is the greatest blessing of the Gospel, indeed it contains every blessing, the forgiveness of sins contains the whole Gospel itself. We shall never go to heaven without forgiveness, no unforgiven sinner will ever enter heaven. How important it is then, to make our calling and election sure and to have the witness of the Spirit that our sins are forgiven. We shall never be rid of sin. We shall never be anything better or different from sinners while we live. There is a kind of religion a progressive sanctification but if people think they will get holier and holier until sin is eradicated, that is a delusion, it is not according to the word of God. I believe it is right to say that the apostle was never any better than a wretched man, in himself. Have you proved that? Have you proved that your heart, your natural heart, continues to be what it ever was, deceitful and desperately wicked? The ruin of our nature is complete. It is very solemn knowledge, but it is solemn to be ignorant of what we are in the ruins of the fall, and yet we sing a truth:

"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost has made him so".

Not made him a sinner, the Holy Ghost does not make anybody a sinner, but the Holy Ghost does convince of sin and shows a sinner what he is and that work of the Holy Ghost in a sinner's heart is sacred, it is the beginning of salvation. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities".

That brings us in the next place to bless the Lord for the Gift, the unspeakable Gift of His dear Son. All benefits are in Him, all spiritual blessings are by Him. All divine favours, all the full sure mercies of David are contained in the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. O what a benefit, what an unspeakable Gift! and it was a Gift of love. "God so loved the world that He gave".. The manner of His love is wonderful. He loved His Son and although it is said that He loves His people with the same love that He loves His Son, yet the divine love of God for His Son is something greater than any other love, and yet He did not withhold His Son. He spared Him not. He delivered Him up. Do you see any benefit in this? The Gift of His Son. Not the Gift of the universe and all the riches it contains, that is dead. But the Gift of His eternal, only begotten, co-equal Son. So beautifully described in the 1st John: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of the world". This is the Gift.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all"..the benefits of the unspeakable Gift of Jesus Christ. There could be no benefit in Jesus Christ except that He was given, He was sent, and as He delighted to come and do the will of His Father; and therefore it brings us to this, not only the manner of love but the manner by which His dear Son came into the world. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners". Well, do you think there are any benefits here? O if you are reduced to a poor destitute, wrecked and ruined sinner, it will be good news from a far country.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits". All the benefits that He brought, all the blessings and divine favours are eternal. We have spoken of creation and providence, there is no eternity in them, they are benefits for time, but when we come to consider the benefits of God's kingdom of grace, everything in it is eternal, and this would be unnecessary except that man is an immortal soul. The breath that God breathed into Adam and he became a living soul was not spiritual life. I do feel that to confuse this may lead to error. When the Lord breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul, he was made immortal, He breathed an immortal life into him and he was a never dying soul. But spiritual life is conveyed by the Holy Ghost when a sinner is born again. "Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits."

The benefit then of the Lord Jesus in the nature of His humanity. There could be no benefits my friends if an angel should come into the world, and it is unthinkable that the eternal Son of God should take human nature with the son of Adam, otherwise everything that He did would be tainted by sin. His life would be tainted by sin. His blessings would be tainted by sin, there would be no blessings, and not only that, he would be a sinner. O the importance, the increasing importance of the virgin birth of God's dear Son. It affects all His benefits. It affects the whole of His life and all of His work. The perfection of holiness, not a spot nor wrinkle, not a speck. His sacred humanity was so sinless, His thoughts incapable of an evil thought and so He came, and His people receive the benefit of it. To my mind the greatest benefit of Christ to His people which contains everything else, is that He came as a Substitute, and not only a Substitute in what He did, but a Substitute in what He became. His sacred humanity is that to which His people are conformed. They are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits", all the benefits of the Son of God in human nature, Emmanuel, God with us.

Then His people receive the benefits of His life, because He was a Substitute, and this brings in the necessity of union with Him. If He is our Substitute, we must have union with Him. There could be no union with the Son of God except that He became Man, no union at all. You think of it, these truths, and think of it personally, as to whether you have any evidence that you have union with the Son of God. If we have, then in everything He did, we did in Him, everything that He became, we became in Him and through Him. O the benefits of Christ in grace. "Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits".

Look at the benefits of Christ's redemption, His atoning blood. "For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold". We said at the outset that all that concerns the dominion and kingdom of God's grace is like the inheritance, it is incorruptible, undefiled and can never fade away. That is the nature of it, and it is of that nature because it derives of the merit of Christ Himself, which again shows the blessedness, the sacredness of His Person. O blessed people who receive the benefits of Christ! Peter speaks of it in his 1st Epistle, indeed He is thus celebrated and extolled throughout the whole of the Scriptures. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance", and everything through this life if we are in union with Christ is being directed to that blessed end, the inheritance, the kingdom of glory. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all" the benefits of His redemption, His sin atoning sacrifice, His precious shed blood. We shall be brought to feel our need of it.

I think I have mentioned, maybe here, or somewhere else, but if we receive the Lord Jesus Christ we receive Him really, mainly in two ways. We receive Him as what we are as self destroyed, ruined sinners, we must receive Him as that, but we receive Him also in what He is, and O how the two things do fit, so that all the benefits of Christ and all His matchless condescension in His finished work, His temptations, His sufferings, His ignominious death, we receive the benefits of it. The benefits of His precious death. His death is sometimes spoken of as passive, but it was not a passive death really, it was with respect to men, "He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb", but O, it was an active work wrought as High Priest upon the Cross. O what a work was finished there! "That by that one sacrifice He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. He was sealing the covenant with His precious blood. Here He seals pardon, Here He completes that satisfaction which the law required and demanded of Him and His people receive the benefits of it. O what an effect it will have upon us if we behold the love of God in Christ upon Calvary.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride".

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits", and as we have said, everyone of these benefits are eternal and everlasting and they will issue in the benefit of the eternal inheritance. Does not the truth it contains so influence your poor soul that you feel it sanctify you within? You think of it, we are here to worship God, and if we are rightly gathered together and this is a part of Zion, then everything that we are occupied with here is eternal, all His grace, all the work of the Spirit in the heart, everything is incorruptible, undefiled and can never fade away, and it will issue in heaven, there is the final benefit.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits".
What a mercy it will be if with our last expiring breath we can from our very soul say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul".

Amen.