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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, Sunday morning,
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"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:" Psalm 103:2

This is a well-worn Psalm, but it cannot be worn out. You will have to exhaust the fullness of Christ before you exhaust this Psalm. But it is a solemn Psalm. It may not appear by the opening to have anything very solemn about it, but it is a solemn thing to bless the Lord. He is fearful in praises.

In the first verse David says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me." Well, a natural man has got nothing within Him to bless the Lord with. A carnal heart cannot bless Him, unbelief will not bless Him; carnal reason denies Him. So that the first consideration is this whether we have anything within us that can bless His holy name, and for this we need a new creature. It is only a new creature that can bless the Lord; the life of God in the soul, which in another place is called the inner man. O how important it is to know whether we have an inner man, a living creature within! If we have not we cannot bless the Lord, unless it is merely with our lips, and that is solemn.

So, in this blessing of the Lord, there is a connexion with what we have received from Him. 'O, my soul, bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits.' So, it is the soul, a living soul, and we shall know whether we have got one or not. It is a terrible thing to have a name to live and to be dead. Dead in the soul: To know all about religion and be destitute of the life of God in our hearts. If any attempt to bless the Lord by those who are in that condition, it is an abomination to Him.

It may be some will think, 'Well, you are spoiling that beautiful language in the Psalm by, talking like that.' O my friends, it is only faith, living faith that can bless the Lord, for it is only faith that can know Him, receive anything from Him; and there are two parts to this second verse. First, 'bless and the Lord,' secondly, 'Forget not all His benefits.' That is a good order - for

*Every grace and every favour,
Comes to us through Jesus' blood. (Gadsby's 180)*

'Bless the Lord.' Paul, writing to the Philippians in that beautiful third chapter says, "Finally brethren rejoice in the Lord," and if you rejoice in Him you will bless Him. We cannot bless Him, but faith will ascribe all blessings, all greatness, all power, all goodness and all grace unto Him. 'Bless the Lord.' In the first place you will bless Him because He is the Lord, and you will rejoice in that. You will be willing for Him to be your Lord, you will be glad not to be your own. You will bless the Lord because He is the Lord and that the government is upon His shoulders. You will bless Him because He has all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in Him. You will bless the Lord because of His divine sovereignty. O this is a cause for blessing! You then can look at every other power; you can look at the Devil then. The Devil is not a sovereign, he is mighty, but he is not almighty. To see the Lord, in His divine sovereignty controlling every event in the universe that He has created will enable you to "Be still," under all circumstances and "Know that He is God."

Have you ever found, in your heart, to rejoice and bless the Lord because He is what He is? It is a distinct experience; and when you see His sovereignty in grace, you can bless Him as a great sinner. O sinners can bless Him, bless Him for the greatness, the invincibility, the sovereignty, together with the freeness of His grace.

'Bless the Lord,' first of all, as we have said, for what He is, and who He is. You will bless Him too for His condescension in veiling His glory in human flesh. O you will ever bless Him for this, otherwise there would be no communication of salvation, grace, pardon, mercy, righteousness ever reaching poor sinners. My soul, bless the Lord; and there is a knowledge in this. Some of you may feel that you are ignorant of Him when you are not. Some of you may feel that you have no faith, when you have. I would not encourage anything but life, but I would encourage a spark of life where it is. Your very mourning over a sense of your ignorance of Him and your deep sense of your need of Him in His salvation is faith.

'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.' In the last verse we read, "Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion, Bless the Lord, O my soul." There are three main places of His dominion and they are, the creation, providence and grace, and the Psalmist takes them in. "Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion, bless the Lord O my soul." It is only faith that can bless Him in the works of creation. We read in the 111th Psalm: "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those that have pleasure therein", but in the next verse it says, the works of the Lord are honourable, and that makes a distinction between His works in creation and providence, and that one strange work that exceeds them all; but faith sees, in all these dominions, the eternal power and Godhead and sovereignty and omnipotence of Jehovah: and I do feel that it is very strengthening to faith if, by the Spirit, we are enabled to meditate upon these three dominions and the benefits of each.

But in each case the source is the Lord. Bless the Lord in His creation, bless the Lord in His providence, bless the Lord in His grace. What a wonderful life that is of faith that can thus live! O what a quietening effect it is amidst all this boisterous and noisy world, full of chaos and tumult! O this is to live by faith! Well, the creation. Wonderful works in creation. It makes that first chapter of Genesis most majestic. However men of intelligence even deny the works of creation as the work of God is a mystery; it is a mystery of iniquity. I have said, and feel it is a right thing to say, that the first five words in the Bible are most blessed: "In the beginning God created "- and that holds good too, in the realm of redemption, in the beginning of a work of grace in the heart, "In the beginning God created." But as we in our feeble way try and unfold these things, the important point is as to what effect it has upon us. Whether we look inside and compare what is going on there and what the word of God declares concerning the greatness of God in His sovereign omnipotence in all the purposes that He has in creation, in providence and grace, whether we are mercifully involved in it. His works are created perfect in creation, perfect to this point, but they are imperfect in that they will end. The perfection of salvation is that it is eternal, but creation is not, it must end. It must decay. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away. But there is the stamp of divine sovereignty and immutability upon the works of creation. There is no confusion in creation. All the confusion of this world is through man, it is a shameful thing, but it is true. 'Only man is vile.'

The works of the Lord praise Him; they are unalterable as to the nature of them. The trees of the field are according to the seed that is in them. All the beasts of the earth continue as they were created in their nature, and it is no small thing to recognise the power, the goodness of God in providing all that is necessary for man and beast from the earth itself. It is an amazing thing. Everything you look upon comes from the earth. Everything we wear, the house we live in, all comes from this earth. What a factory it is! a mighty factory producing everything for the sustenance, the being and the well-being of man. 'O my soul, bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits' of creation. It spreads our table, it maintains our bodies, and how it should deeply humble us for we are debtors to Him in creation and completely dependent upon Him. We can produce nothing. Man can invent but that is a very different matter from creating, he can create nothing. O this glorious creation!

'O my soul, bless the Lord, forget not all His benefits.' "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." O that our dear young people might be brought to know Him and remember Him. It will put them and put men in their right places. There will be no place there for pride for we cannot produce a corn of wheat, a crumb of bread or a drop of water. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" 'O my soul, bless the Lord, forget not all His benefits.' The faithfulness that is round about Him, he rising of the sun, "day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge." They praise Him, night and day, moon and stars and sun. There is perfection in them and all for the benefit of man.

'O my soul, bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits', in providence. "The lot is cast into the lap and the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord," and that holds true in all three of these dominions. The lot is cast into the lap in creation, and the lap creation was cast into was time. Time was the first thing that was created. Time does not belong to God, He is eternal, but He created time, "In the beginning." There was no beginning with God but He created time and cast the lot of creation in the lap of time. Then there is providence. 'O my soul, bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits.'

The first lot that is cast into the lap is when one is born. When we look at a new-born babe lying on its Mother's lap, and consider if that child is spared to three score years and ten, what it has before it, and yet that lot is cast into the lap and the whole disposing every movement of that child's future, is disposed of by the sovereignty of God. It is a tremendous truth, but with respect to His people the lot of providence is interlaced with the lot of salvation, and the whole of the providential pathway of a child of God, even in his unregeneracy, is under the conduct of the covenant of grace. O my soul, bless the Lord for His over-ruling providence!

Well, when you look back, if you are enabled to remember all the way the Lord thy God has led thee, of course, in a special sense, the Lord thy God only led thee since thou wast called by grace, but actually He has led thee from the womb. But you will not remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee except since He called thee from darkness into light. But this takes in all the incidents of your life, and there is one thing that you will bless the Lord for, that He did not allow you to be your own. A natural man is determined to be his own and you may remember the time when the Lord held up as it were, His mighty hand and said, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Your paths you will find traced out in the Psalms. He led His people about, He instructed them, He proved them, tested them to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep His commandments or no.

Now it may be the Lord will help you to look back as you would seek to remember all the benefits of His leadings, preservations in providence, and some of those particulars, they were very important events which hinged upon apparent trifles. Some of you may remember an incident which may have changed the whole outlook of your life. The Lord has the hearts of all men in His hand. He knows the end from the beginning, and it is He who leads His people that all His purposes concerning them may be fulfilled. Yet there are many paradoxes, many apparent contradictions and some simple event might change the whole conduct of your life, and alter, completely alter the direction of your movements, but God is in it and this will give you to see the importance of prayer, that He may teach us to do His will. Forget not all His benefits in providence. This will give you thankfulness of heart when you see some cases, when we look at some of our fellow-men who may be more deserving than we are ourselves, with deformed bodies, cripples. "Who maketh thee to differ" even in that kind of thing? We shall thank Him too, in providence, if we were favoured with godly parents; it is not everyone that is. O may our dear young people value their godly parents and may the Lord answer the prayers of those parents on behalf of their children, both with respect to their providences and also to their souls.

The benefits of the Lord in providence are the benefits of His immutable sovereignty and of His wisdom. Infinite wisdom directs their way. His immutability is such that nothing can change Him. There is nothing haphazard in providence with respect to God, although there is often much confusion in our pathway. It is a point I feel that we need to remember concerning providence, and that is, providence itself is changing, is mutable, but the God of providence is immutable, there is no confusion with Him. He has a plan, He has a purpose for each of His people and that is why He leads them in different ways and yet whichever way in providence you are led it will end at the City of Habitation, and He so exercises His people that they may receive teaching, teaching to profit, that their faith might be tried, and that teaching will show them who God is.

Have not some of you realised, you will if you are being led by the Spirit, how that everything that you pass through will eventually bring you to the throne of grace, and will give you instruction with respect to God Himself. Have you not found a connexion between all the changing scenes of your life with your knowledge of God? How do you know that God is omnipotent? You might say it because the Word of God declares it. That is true, that may be a nominal knowledge, but an experimental knowledge of the omnipotence of God is by His deliverances and in His leadings in providence. He will bring you into places where none but an omnipotent God can deliver you; and that is why you are brought there. You trace His people through the Word of God and see the benefits of the Lord, the benefits of His divine perfections as they are used for your preservation, for your guidance to overcome your enemies. Light, that true light to shine upon the road that leads you to heaven.

'O my soul, bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits,' the benefits of His divine providence. How secure His people are!

*All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command. (Gadsby's 64)*

It is a wonderful truth, and yet in His wisdom He will lead, us in places where we will not be able to see, to trace His goings. "His way is in the sea, His footsteps in the mighty waters and His footsteps

are not known." O He brings His people often into darkness and not into light. You trace it in the case of those that have gone before. The benefits to Joseph: it appeared to be very otherwise and the Lord gave him promises of future greatness and then right upon that promise he found himself in a pit, and after the pit he found himself in prison. Could Joseph take this language to the Lord when he was in the pit and in the prison? 'O my soul, bless the Lord, forget not all His benefits.' I feel that Joseph's faith did live in the pit, there was a benefit in it, and there was a benefit in the prison.

Take for instance again Daniel. A man greatly beloved, he was a man of great faith. He was put down into the lion's den, but there he confesses his faith in God who was able to stop the mouths of the lions. So you go through the providences of God as recorded of those that have gone before, O the benefits, the benefits of the deep places. The benefits of disappointments, sometimes of failures, oppositions, and persecutions. There is a purpose in it my friends and if any of you now are passing through tribulation, or some particular troubles, something which perplexes you which you cannot understand, there will be a benefit in it in the end. Therefore the Apostle wraps the whole part of this text up in one sentence, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." O how complete that word is in His providence! All things, the worst of things, the worst calamities, the most bitter sorrows, all shall work together for good to them that love God." O my soul, bless the Lord, forget not all His benefits.'

So there are the benefits of our body, the benefits of health and strength, benefits of kind, godly, affectionate friends, we are surrounded with His benefits, but it is a mercy to feel it when everything appears to be against us. Jacob's end was very blessed. We come to some wrong conclusions when we view things out of Christ. O the sorrows that Jacob had and he said, "All these things are against me," but they were not; they issued in a benefit to him and gave him a hope that he would yet see his Joseph, and when he saw the waggons his spirit revived and he said 'It is enough.'

'Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all the benefits' of His providence. Just one more word here: The Lord demonstrated this when on earth, concerning the multitude and the loaves and fishes. The disciples quite reasonably said, Send them away that they might go into the villages and buy victuals. The Lord said that they need not depart, give ye them to eat. No need for them to go away. They said, we have but a few loaves and fishes, He said, bring them to Me, they have no need to depart, bring them to Me! 'Bless the Lord O my soul.' The fullness of creation, the fullness of providence is in Him, and that is an exhortation to His people under every circumstance, wherever you may be, however you may be diminished, whatever oppression you may be under, persecutions, whatever enemies, whatever disease, "They need not depart, give ye them to eat." There are but a few loaves and fishes, Bring them to Me.

It was the same with the father and his afflicted son. The disciples could not heal him, the Lord said, "Bring him to Me." 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits' of His creation, that maintains our bodies, maintains us in being. Forget not His benefits in providence which guides us from day to day, preserves our going out and our coming in. Providence interlaced with grace that will eventually bring His people to the desired haven. "So He brought them to the desired haven," and that little word 'so' is filled with all the changing scenes of life, with all the rugged pathway, with all the ins and outs, ups and downs, with all the sorrows and griefs; "so, He brings them to their desired haven."

'O my soul, bless the Lord and forget not all the benefits' of His grace, the benefits of redemption, the benefits of salvation. This exceeds all. All that we have been trying to speak about has an end, but salvation is eternal and it brings us back to the first three words of the text: 'Bless the Lord.' Salvation is of the Lord and you can bless Him for redemption. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy and gathered them from the north and from the south from the east and from the west."

Well then, it is a mercy, if this lot, the lot of redemption, was cast into the lap of the covenant of grace, and therefore, you will bless the Lord for the covenant, because it is an eternal covenant. It was made between the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It was made on behalf of the Church, on behalf of His people. It was not made with them, no. The covenant in which man was created was made with man, and that covenant was broken, and therefore the Lord did not make another covenant with man, but He made a covenant on man's behalf, and what a security that is. Have you ever been thankful for the new covenant? It is based upon the foundation of the infinite Jehovah, it is secured by all the divine perfections of Jehovah. It is made on behalf of His people and takes in and secures and protects and leads them all the way through the wilderness to heaven. It is a wonderful consideration that your life's minutest circumstance is under the direction and conduct of the covenant of grace.

'O my soul, bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits' of the covenant. David blessed the Lord for this when he came to the end. "Although my house be not so with God." Poor David had a lot of trouble in his family, had a lot of trouble in the nation, he was a man of war, a man of conflict, and he had trouble with his son Absalom, but the covenant of grace held him. "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me," that is, made it over to him, showed it to him. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and he will show them His covenant." He showed it to David, and there was comfort and consolation. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

Amen.