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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
Sunday morning, 29th October 1967

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." Psalm 103:2-4.

It may be that such a Scripture as this may cause some of you to feel very sad. You might say, 'Well, of all the Scriptures in the Bible, I should think that a word like this would make you feel glad.' But do you feel, with respect to your profession and your life, that you live in this calm and thankful mood? Everybody is glad when things are well and pleasant, but that is a very different thing from blessing the Lord. "All that is within me, bless His holy name." (v.1) I have felt some of the most comfortable and sweet Scriptures are very discriminating, very searching, and they are intended to be. The very sweetness of this word may search some of our hearts. But what is needed in order to this exhortation: "Bless the Lord, O my soul"? Well, in the first place, there must be a knowledge of Him. There must be faith, living faith. It is a good thing to know God. There were those at Athens who worshipped an unknown God. Although that was the seat of art and of learning, yet they worshipped an unknown God. We shall never bless the Lord from a heart like that; there is nothing in that heart to know Him, to bless Him.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul." It is the soul; it is heart work; it is not automatic, it is not mere mental effort, but it comes from the soul, to believe that "every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17) "Bless the Lord, O my soul." There is another thing. We must have received something from Him in order to bless Him. It would be presumptuous to bless, to thank God, if we have never received anything from Him. I know all men receive their being, their comforts, the blessings of this life from Him, but they do not know Him; they do use the blessings as coming from Him; but if we know Him and have faith in Him, and love Him, then we receive even our temporal blessings as from His good hand, and can endorse what we sometimes sing:

"Every grace and every favour
Comes to us through Jesus' blood."

(180)

"Bless the Lord, O my soul." This is a living soul, and it brings us to look at our souls. We look at our bodies; our bodies make demands upon us all day long, calling out for satisfaction, for indulgence. We know we have got a body, but do we know we have a soul? And have we any evidence that we have a living soul? Any evidence that we have a new heart created, that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? A heart in which Christ dwells by faith? A heart in which there is faith, that wonderful faculty of the new man of grace? "O my soul." We do well to consider these simple and yet profound things, my friends. And there is nothing so valuable as the soul. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36) The soul really is yourself, and if we have a new heart, it is a new set of faculties really. There is a new mind, a new will, new affections, a new object, new feelings, new eyes, new ears. This is the soul that can bless the Lord; no other soul can. Sometimes you will feel the life of God anointing your soul; you will feel it

moving. It is a great thing (I would speak properly) but many places in the Scriptures refer to it as a woman in travail, a woman with child – there is an inward life, and an inward moving, an inward heaving, an inward desire. O what a great thing it is to have a living soul!

"Bless the Lord, O my soul." So you will see that this simple exhortation is not ordinary. It cannot be exercised mechanically. It is a spring of life. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." **All** benefits, both natural and spiritual, must come from the Lord. Man, in his fallen state, can benefit nobody spiritually. It is a very solemn condition. If we live as we were born, we can benefit nobody, because self will be our centre, self will be our end, and what a self it is: "Shapen in iniquity...and in sin" and that is all that belongs to us naturally. (Psalm 51:5) But "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

"Bless the Lord, O my soul" – and the first thing that you would bless the Lord for is any hope in His mercy, any hope that He has made you to differ from what you once were; if He has made you to differ from the world that lieth in wickedness; if He has called you by sovereign grace. O if you had the assurance of that, you would bless the Lord for it! Although I do feel this, that perhaps the first thing you would bless the Lord for is for Himself. You will bless Him that He is what He is, that He is eternal, immutable, unchangeable, that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, that He is omnipresent. You will bless Him for His divine power, you will bless Him for what He is. It must be the first thing. Well, can we find this in our experience? Have you ever blessed the Lord because He is the Lord? Have you ever heard Him declare Himself: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Malachi 3:6)

Have you ever blessed the Lord for His perfections? Why my friends, ever in creation it reflects the incomprehensible perfection of Jehovah. You take, for instance, the sun, the rising and setting of the sun. If that were to alter a split second, things would be in utter confusion. I believe that all the laws of nature are dependent upon that great, the greatest body, the sun, and you would thank the Lord and bless Him for the manifestation of His perfections as it maintains the universe – that same Word which called the universe into being, by that same Word everything is kept in store.

You will bless the Lord for what He is – very great – His greatness is unsearchable. And there is this, you will find that, as you are led into the truth of the Being of God, as He is revealed in the Person of His dear Son, that all these considerations will be connected with your soul's salvation. And you will understand that word of Paul to the Romans: "If God" – if this great infinite God, in all His sovereignty and power – "be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) And you will bless Him. You will find that the life of God in your soul will bless Him. Sometimes you will find it spring up unaccountably, and you will view His mighty power in creation, in the corn that covers the fields in its season; and you will see that He has produced all sufficiency for men and for beast, and you will bless Him for what He is.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Then you will bless Him, as we have just hinted, if He has given you hope in His mercy. This is something different from the benefits that you receive from Him in creation. Salvation! O the word expands, gets bigger and bigger as we get older. Salvation! "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all" the benefits of redemption, of

salvation, the benefits of the Gospel. But how can we bless the Lord if we have not received them? I dare say it will exercise some hearts in those that are tender in conscience.

Where the Holy Spirit's influence is, in reading the Word, or under the preaching of the Gospel, there will be a continual reference to our own case, and that is one way by which we work out our own salvation. So that you look within and see whether you can find any of these spiritual blessings and benefits of salvation in your heart? You need them, you seek after them, but you want to find them there. Christ to dwell in your heart the hope of glory. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." But then again, there would be no benefits if it were not for His condescension to bring benefits down.

Speaking now particularly of spiritual blessings, speaking of redemption and of salvation, there would have been none but for His condescension, nothing at all. It is beyond our comprehension to imagine what this world would have been like since man fell, if the Lord Jesus had never come to this earth, and become incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us. We cannot imagine the condition of fallen man, without Christ – to be left, to be abandoned to just that state of death and destruction, darkness, despair, to have no rule, no moral code set up, no Scripture. O the benefits of Christ!

You may think upon it, and if the Holy Spirit were to guide you, it might even be made profitable to consider what this world would be if Christ had never come. Have you ever imagined it? Men fallen would be worse than the beasts of the field. Well, that is something to consider. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not" the benefits of His condescension to bring immortal blessings down. Divine benefits. To come and to be the light of this dark world; to come and to bring life, that His people might have that life more abundantly; to bring salvation. O the benefits of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Nothing would have redounded to the glory of God, if He had not come. A lost human race could never bring glory to God, not at all. That He should create man in His own image, and for man having fallen never to be restored, would bring no glory to God. And yet, for this very purpose He created man, created a creature possible to receive a revelation of Himself, a creature possible to receive the purposes and counsels of Jehovah, a creature possible to be transformed by divine grace into children of God: "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17) He came so as to renew the earth. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." He brought them all from heaven, and we must look by faith to heaven to receive them. Nothing will ever bless our souls, nothing will be of any spiritual benefit to us, except that which comes down from heaven – and that is why faith looks up.

"Forget not all His benefits." The benefits of His human nature, and that that human nature was born of a virgin, and therefore was sinless, and in that human nature He became a Substitute for His people. Do you think these are benefits? Is there anything in these things that you have to bless the Lord for? The Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest consolation to a poor sinner. The fact, the blessed truth, is amazing, that God's own Son, eternal, equal with the Father, heaven's highest glory, could in the mystery of godliness become Man, and take into union with Himself His people, and become their Substitute. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not" the benefits of His substitution. If you see this by faith, you will be amazed. If your faith is never amazed, I very much doubt whether it is

faith, the faith of God's elect. Solomon was so amazed when he had a sight of the majesty of Jehovah, that he paused in the midst of the dedication of the Temple: "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27) His faith was amazed. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Well, when you see this Substitute, you will see two things, and that by the Holy Spirit. You will see yourself. Nobody knows themselves, or sees themselves, unless the true light shines – and what a sight that is! Have you ever seen yourself? Do you know yourself? And then, if that same blessed Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus Christ in His love, in His grace, coming, laying aside, veiling His glory in human flesh, and coming to take your place, to take all that you are, and to give you all that He is. Have you ever been amazed? Do you think it is anything to bless Him for? O the substitution of Christ! It is the Fountain of hope, and everything in it is perfect, a perfect Substitute. He does not leave anything of us and of ourselves with us, but takes it all, although we must take it to the grave. We shall take a body of sin and death to the grave. But, says the apostle to the Colossians: "Ye are complete in Him." (Colossians 2:10) Absolutely complete in Him, because He is a Substitute. His holiness is yours, His righteousness is yours, He is made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

What a benefit it is that He is a Mediator! "There is one God," glorious, holy, blessed, dreadful God, "and one Mediator between that God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) Do you think that the Mediator is any benefit? You could never pray without a Mediator. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) Go, Paul says, to the Hebrews: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22) "Let us draw near." There is a Mediator. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Then there is the benefit of His work, His Person – and His work derives its merit and its validity from His Person. That is important. It will not be a mere doctrine to you. I do believe, in my little way, that I have felt that. It is the Person of Emmanuel – that is the Foundation. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect." He is not the Rock because His work is perfect, but His work is perfect because He is the Rock. But O what a benefit that is! "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" – the benefits of a Substitute, the benefits of a Mediator, the benefits of His finished work. Salvation is a work, and one great work was to fulfil the law. The law is holy, just and good; it reflects the holiness, the justice, the glory of God, and it must be vindicated. But the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law. The law entered into all the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Lord Jesus had not been what He is, God's eternal Son, the law would never have accepted Him as a Mediator or as a Substitute. It would have rejected Him. And the law entered into every particular of His life, and of His work, and of His sufferings. When you come to consider these things, and realise that it was necessary in order for the forgiveness of sins, O what a great salvation it is! But He went to the end of the law, He did not stop, He magnified the law. That is a great word; if you magnify a thing you bring out its details, so that there was no jot or tittle of the law that was not fulfilled. And He came to fulfil it, and not to destroy it. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all" the benefits of a fulfilled law, an honoured law.

Then there are the benefits of the death of Christ. O if the Holy Ghost would give us to see that this is salvation! This is the work of salvation. His death was the death of deaths. His death vanquished hell, His resurrection opened heaven. And all this by the Holy Spirit is revealed in a sinner's heart; and what Christ thus did and accomplished is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the work of grace throughout, from to end. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not" the benefits of His blessed death. Death is the most terrible thing, it is absolute destruction, and we died spiritually when we fell. And the apostle Paul blesses God for this. He says: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." (2 Corinthians 1:10) The Holy Spirit, by His death, took the sting away out of death for His people. And if ever the Holy Ghost bears witness in your heart that the sting of sin is taken out of your death, you will have something to bless Him for.

Well my friends, this salvation, and this work of the Holy Ghost, goes on in the hearts of His people, and yet in the midst of all outside things. And you look at that. If the few feeble remarks we have made are true, and you find them in your soul, then you go into business, your everyday anxieties and cares and responsibilities and disappointments and annoyances and calamities, why, it will give you to see things in a right perspective. It is the only way by which we shall be able to "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6) And we shall cast our cares and burdens upon Him. We shall see His sufficiency, that He is omnipotent to deliver from the most powerful enemy, and that His precious blood can cleanse the deepest dye or sin. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Then there are the benefits of providence. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" is a great word which declares divine sovereignty. (Proverbs 16:33) And yet, as you trace the pathway of those that have gone before, pilgrims in the wilderness, it appears as though their way is very crooked, seems as though they have more adversity and affliction than anybody else. And so they do, because God has provided some better thing for them than this world. But O the benefits of God's providence toward those that are His! This is the great benefit, as it were wrapped up in one parcel: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) It is a wonderful statement, and we need faith to believe it, because we shall be brought into circumstances that seem to contradict it. O what contradictions meet in the pathway of a pilgrim! I think perhaps one of the most blessed examples we have is that of the 107th Psalm. Why, in some parts of that Psalm you would never think they would ever get to the City of Habitation, never think that they would ever get to the desired haven. And when you come to look and to observe the runners who are running the race set before them, some obstructions they have to contend with, you would think they will never get any further, this will stop them. But "The righteous shall hold on his way." (Job 17:9) And "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him" (Isaiah 3:10), because the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and because He knows the end from the beginning, and because He has appointed everything concerning His people in the covenant of grace. So we have that exhortation: "Trust in Him at all times, ye people" – in the worst of times. O how His people have often been hedged up, their way hedged up as with hewn stones, have impassable mountains, locked doors, mighty enemies, as we were trying to speak a little on Friday. Jehoshaphat, O what an army! What a mighty enemy he had, and did not know what to do. He could do nothing with it; but he took the

right, the only course: "Our eyes are upon Thee...O God the Lord: in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." (2 Chronicles 20:12 & Psalm 141:8)

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." At times you remember them when you are at the ends of the earth. I do, like that of Jonah: "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord." (ch.2:7) He did not forget Him. He remembered that the Lord was almighty, that He was omnipresent, that His divine sovereignty was absolute, that He was Lord of the sea and air and land. He remembered it, but he was in the bottom of the sea: "I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; but I will look again toward Thy holy temple." (v.4) "Forget not, then, all His benefits."

But then the Psalmist comes to the most vital thing: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Everything the Lord does is complete. He does not forgive some of them, He does not forgive all of them except one, but He forgives them ALL. Do you know your sinnership? Have you been given to possess the sins of your youth? O my friends, sin figures largely in the Scriptures, and I am thankful that sin is in the Gospels. Some critics may question that. I do not much mind about critics, - I have got too old for that. Sin is in the Gospel. Why, the whole Gospel is a remedy for it. "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." (1 Timothy 1:15) Is that a benefit? That is the purpose for which He came, to save sinners, but He only saves the chief of sinners. If you can look about and find sinners worse than yourself, then you have got something to learn. I would not speak lightly, but I believe I have known, and known myself so that there has not been a sinner so bad.

I remember a dear man, a very exercised soul, he said once he sat in the Chapel and said to himself, 'This chapel is full of sinners, but I am the chief.' "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." O my friends, there is cause for gratitude. You may have some particular and powerful sins, and so persistent, that you really can understand some sins being forgiven, but there may be one - you know your own hearts, your own sore, your own grief - you may feel that here is a certain sin in my life, I really don't feel, don't know that that can be forgiven. But how can it be forgiven? "This Man, because He continueth ever" - it is because of Who He is! O how precious is Christ! "This Man, because He continueth ever" - He is eternal - "hath an unchangeable Priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him". (Hebrews 7:24-25) And if you come unto God by Him, He will save you to the uttermost.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." You won't be able ever to forgive yourself. We shall never get to the end of the 51st Psalm. At least, if you, do I have no opinion of your religion. Some of you, I believe, know what it is to walk up and down and to and fro in that Psalm. I have of a night. I have got a very bad memory, but I can remember that Psalm from beginning to end; it is burnt into my very bones. O the blessing of forgiveness! Where there is forgiveness, there will be conviction. Where there is conviction, there will be repentance and godly sorrow, and where there is repentance and godly sorrow, there will be forgiveness of sins.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Blots them out. O the price! Look at redemption; look at the Redeemer; look at the great High Priest;

look at the Substitute upon Calvary's tree. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not" all the benefits of the forgiveness of sins. That is a wonderful word. I will conclude with – if I can find it in Isaiah: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee." And then, look at the effect: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it." (Isaiah 44:22,23) And if the Lord does it, it is done, it is done for ever. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not" all the benefits of the forgiveness of sins.

Amen.