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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Sunday morning, February 9th, 1964

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Psalm 116:6-7

The Word of God is the only infallible rule for our conduct. It is the only safe guide in life's journey. It sets up an unerring standard of doctrine, experience and practice. It would be a mercy if we had more diligence in searching the Holy Scriptures. The greatest gift to the Church of God, second to the gift of His dear Son, and therefore, it will be a mercy if, in reading the Word of God, it searches our hearts; if we come to the Word of God, and work out our own salvation according to what is written. As for instance, in this Psalm, David says: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication." Can we say that? I feel that it is increasingly important to bring the Word of God into our consciences, and see where we stand before Him. "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." So the Psalmist was a praying man, and he received answers to his prayers, and this strengthened his faith, and brought into his heart that confidence of faith in God whereby he determined to call upon Him as long as he lived.

Although we may be enabled, by the Spirit, to walk according to the rules of divine inspiration, yet we shall not be immune from trouble and sorrow and tribulation; for he says: "The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." If we are brought there, the Lord may have this purpose: to give us more gracious diligence, to search the Word more diligently at the throne of grace, to put more urgency into our faith. If it were not for these exercises, what a spineless kind of religion ours would be, how flabby! But O, when the Lord exercises His people, and brings them into the blessedness of that man whom the Lord chastens and teaches out of His law!

"The Lord preserveth the simple." This character "simple" has two distinct meanings. A simple person may be a weak-minded, silly, foolish person; but this is not the intention of the text. Very much otherwise. "Simple" here means: not double-minded, not duplicate. It is to have a single eye to the glory of God; to have one object, the object of faith; to seek first that one thing needful. "The Lord preserveth the simple." He that fears God. Not like Bunyan's "Mr. Facing-both-ways." To be simple, a single eye, a true heart, without hypocrisy, meek.

"The Lord preserveth the simple." They need preservation, because the very opposite is in the world, and the worldly prudent, the treacherous dealers, "have dealt very treacherously," said Jeremiah. (ch.12:1,6) Therefore, the simple need to be preserved from the deceitfulness of the world. It is a remarkable Scripture (Psalm 37:11): "The meek shall inherit the earth" – those that are without self-defence, trustful, artless – yet they shall inherit the earth. So "the Lord preserveth the simple." But simplicity, in a spiritual sense, is to trust wholly in the Lord. This is simplicity: "Other refuge have I none." (303) No alternative. This is simplicity: "Give me Christ, or else I die." (737) O the contrast between that and a double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways!

"The Lord preserveth the simple." This preservation is from His peculiar love over those that fear His name. You take it in this connexion: the Lord said, or it is said of Him in the 13th chapter of John: "Having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (v.1) Now the connexion there with this text: "the Lord preserveth the simple" is this: if you take out "were in the world" you lose all the beauty of that Scripture. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end" is true, but you see the divine compassion in His preservation: "Having loved His own, which were in the world." They are in that world among deceitful dealers, unscrupulous men, worldly-wise men, worldly-prudent men. They are in the world, but "having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" – and the Lord will preserve them.

It has this in it too: Jude speaks of those who are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." (v.1) O this is a great blessing! This simple word: "The Lord preserveth the simple." Jehovah. Too in this verse, a simple sinner who is reduced to the simplicity of a sinner and nothing else. There is a simplicity in that. Not a sinner **and** something, but a sinner **only**; and the Lord, Jehovah, infinite in His wisdom, in glory, in the majesty of His infinite Being, in His omnipotence, preserveth the simple. And upon the ground of what has gone before in the experience of the Psalmist, "He preserveth the simple" in this way: "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." (Psalm 102:17) Now this simplicity comes into every part of experience, it is unadulterated. When a man is brought to destitution, there is nothing pretended in it, it is destitution. When he has the sentence of death within himself, it is complete death; there is a simplicity, an absoluteness in it, there are no two ways about it. When a man is brought low, when he is brought down to the dust, he is there; it is a simple truth, a real condition, an experience.

These are the places, and this is the people whom the Lord will preserve. Take the two things together. There is this simple people, whom the Lord will preserve and help and bring through; but there are these double-minded, worldly-wise men, hypocrites, always saying one thing and meaning another, pretenders; and the Lord puts them together in that text we quoted: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law; that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be being digged for the wicked." (Psalm 94:12-13) While the Lord preserves those that fear His great name, though they are in the world, their soul is among lions, yet they are the only people who are safe; the only poor people that are rich; the only people that are happy, having the God of Jacob for their help; and as He is guiding them safely through the storms of life and leading them in the right way to a city of habitation, He is digging a pit for the wicked.

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me." The Psalmist speaks from experience. I say again: How do we read the Bible? It would be profitable to us to examine ourselves, and see whether we have any evidence that we are in the same footsteps of the flock. "I was brought low, and He helped me." Well, there are many ways of being brought low. The first way: When the Lord rebukes a man for iniquity, He makes his beauty consume away like a moth, and He turns his comeliness into corruption, convinces him of sin. (see Psalm 39:11 & Daniel 10:8) He gives a man to truly realise, by the teaching of the Spirit, what he is in himself, alone. It will bring you low. A blessed experience, though very solemn. I believe I have been brought low, and that is a beginning of a work of the Spirit in the heart.

Have you ever been brought low by the Holy Spirit convincing you of the universal sin that is in your being? Brought low, so that you have been made a leper, and feel it, so that you have felt that you must put a covering over your upper lip, and cry: Unclean, unclean? Have you ever been brought to know that in yourself you have nothing but sin, and death, and ruin, and corruption, and nothing else? "Brought low." I believe this is a preparation for the Gospel, a preparation for salvation, a preparation for heaven itself. If we are never brought into that experience, then as yet we know nothing rightly of God. You may depend upon it, when the Holy Ghost thus reveals a sinner to himself, he is revealed to himself in the sight of a holy, infinitely holy, and just God.

"I was brought low." If that was all, and we were left to it, we should sink in despair. I believe that Judas was brought low and knew it. In exasperation he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the Pharisees. Though he was a covetous man, he was willing to take that money back to them for the remorse that was in his conscience; no repentance in his heart. He had no help, no God, no grace; he was brought low, and he sank into perdition. But here: "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me." O mercy, sweet mercy, free grace! He helps His people by a secret influence, an influence of His Spirit, and makes the law in their experience a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. I feel in my own judgment that that Scripture belongs only to those who are appointed to obtain salvation. The law is a schoolmaster to bring a sinner to Christ; it is never a schoolmaster unto a reprobate to bring **him** to Christ. This is how the Lord helps those that are brought low, brought down to death in themselves, despair in themselves. They are shut up. The law can give them no relief, the law dare not show them any mercy; but they are brought to this, this is the help of that blessed Scripture: "What the law could not do" – what it would be unjust for the law to do – the law would lose its glory, the law would infringe the justice, and sully the holiness of God, if it attempted to show mercy – but "what the law could not do...God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" did. (Romans 8:3) O what a help that is, when the same Spirit condemns a sinner to death, then leads him to the Lord Jesus! O the attraction of it!

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me." Well, where this is the case it, will prove true in the pathway of life. Some of you can endorse this in your experience, as you look back to some of the low places in which you have been. You will find too that, where one is being led by the Spirit, providence and grace go hand-in-hand. You may be brought low in body, low and dark in mind, and united trials meet; and if in this condition you should also realise soul destitution, and soul desertion, you would be in a low place, a helpless place; to prove that no man can keep alive his own soul. You may be brought among the heathen, feel with David: "My soul is among lions," be surrounded by influences that are evil, and –

"All things to promote the fall,
Show a mighty fitness." (Gadsby's 306)

"I was brought low, but the Lord helped me."

Sometimes –

"He lends an unseen hand,
And gives a secret prop,
Which keeps us waiting stand,
Till He completes our hope." (Gadsby's 749)

Sometimes He will help in such circumstances as being the God of patience and consolation. A beautiful character is assigned unto Him in Romans (ch.15:4): "The God of patience and consolation." And when He gives that inward, secret looking unto Him: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord," there is conveyed to the soul a secret hope. You take Jeremiah in the low dungeon. His enemies let him down into that dungeon; the Lord permitted it. But in the 3rd chapter of Lamentations you see there, when he was so low, that the Lord heard his cry, heard his breathing. And you may have been in such circumstances. There was just an inward cry; and when you had not strength or courage to cry, there was a breathing, a looking, a looking up and away from all the surroundings, and faith believed in God. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1) O this secret help! It is that still small voice which caused Elijah to cover his face under a sense of sacred awe at the majesty of God. Not an earthquake, not a mighty rushing wind, not a fire, but a still small voice. Some of you may know this, and perhaps draw the bedclothes over your head, and have felt a desire to be shut out from all creatures, and your poor soul has been lifted up: "Unto Thee, O Lord, do lift I up my soul." This is the inward help of those that are brought low.

Many of our friends are brought low in affliction. The Lord has mercifully delivered some; but how blessed is the Word of God, because it is a living Word. He sent a word to Joseph. He sent His word and healed him, although before, "the word of the Lord tried him." (Psalm 105:19) Why did it try Joseph? Why, because everything went contrary to the promises that God had given him. It appeared as though everything was wrong. Ah, you may have known that, when you have gone into captivity! O the teaching there is in the captivity of His people in Babylon! Then perhaps you could see nothing but prison walls. "The word of the Lord tried him." You take this word of the Lord to a captive people: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11) But O in their circumstances, how the devil could come and say: "Where is now their God?" (Psalm 115:2) Look at that promise; why, there is no prospect of its fulfilment! What then? Why, you need patience, you need: "as your day so shall your strength shall be." (see Deuteronomy 33:25)

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me" – therefore – "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This is the soliloquy of faith; it is an evidence of living faith, for that faith speaks, speaks in your heart. It will always speak for God; it is a gift of God; it is a faculty of the new creature. Well, have we a faith that speaks? When you have been brought low, low in soul, low in your mind and in darkness, low in your circumstances, low in your body in affliction, have you been conscious of an inward voice, faith that argues with the Lord as did Job? He said: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" (ch.23:3) You may have been in a position where there was every influence but the influence of God; the voice of the wicked; not a single whisper from any that feared God. And in your surroundings have you had that inward, perhaps not the very words, but the inward experience of that? "O that I knew where I might find God! that I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would pour out my soul unto Him!" Well, this is faith's voice. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul."

We have the same thing in Psalm 95: "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." (v.6) Can you feel it? See where it comes from: "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me." Therefore says faith to a poor, troubled, restless, sinner:

"Return unto thy rest." It is His people's rest. Referring again to that Scripture: "O come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker," if He is our God, and we are the sheep of His hand and of His pasture, "He opens His hand, and giveth them their meat in due season." (see Psalm 145:15-16) So that the Lord's people have meat to eat the world knows nothing of. They have a rest, a rest which is different from any other natural rest. And they will never find rest until they find rest in God, rest in the Gospel, rest in all divine institutions, rest in worship, rest in Zion. The Church is Zion's only rest, and here is the inward voice of faith by the Holy Spirit.

O what a blessing it is to have faith, a speaking faith, because it is God speaking through it! Remember that. Some of you may fear that the Lord has never spoken to you. "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice." Well, I feel warranted to say this, that if you have ever spoken to the Lord, by the Spirit, the Lord has first spoken to you; for He will never be second. The Lord will always be first in everything. "We love Him, because He **first** loved us." (1 John 4:19) We speak to Him because He **first** speaks to us. Poor sinner, have you ever spoken to the Lord? These are important things. Be honest; have you ever said anything to Him? I do not mean like a parrot; I do not mean to remember a Scripture and quote it; but have you ever – from your experience? The text is experience.

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought, low and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul." And this is a speaking faith. Have you ever said to the Lord: "God be merciful to me a sinner?" (Luke 18:13) If you have, He first spoke to you about your sinnership by His Spirit. Have you ever said to Him from your very heart: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation?" (Psalm 106:4) If you have, then He made the favour of His people and His salvation both necessary in your soul, and a desire in your affections.

He speaks first. Have you ever said this to Him: "O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed?" (1 Chronicles 4:10) If you have, He put that desire in your heart for a blessing indeed; also gave you to realise that no other blessing was any good. The blessings of this life are great, of the least of which we are unworthy. O the blessings of this life, my friends! We are unworthy of them: the glorious rising of the sun throughout the whole of the day, in all the provision and comforts and supplies that we have. Yet they are not blessings indeed. No. Is there something more that you need?

Well, we make those few remarks in reference to this faith, this inward voice of faith: "Return unto Thy rest, O my soul." It is your soul. It always comes back to the soul. You hear but very little about David's body, you hear but very little about his earthly kingdom, it is David's soul and his God. I say again, in reading it, is it so with us?

"Rest." What a sweet word it is! Where will you find it? Where you find rest, you will find true happiness. Are you in agreement with what we sing:

"Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where's thy seat, O tell me where?
Learning, pleasure, wealth and fame,
All cry out, 'It is not here.' " (Gadsby's 988)

Neither is there any rest in those things. There is to a worldling. Yes, a worldling can find rest in the world. Be thankful if you cannot. I remember when I had no other desire but this world, and there should I have been. Have you ever been amazed to find yourself in a Chapel amongst a few poor people, despised people? You might have felt yourself unworthy, less than the least of them all. It is an amazing thing. There is a rest in this world; if you can rest in this world you will never go to heaven. "Weary of earth, myself and sin." (Gadsby's 386)

There is more in that than appears on the surface. What then? "Return unto thy rest" – this rest of faith. And what is this rest? It is Christ. Christ is the solid Ark. The ravens could find rest, rest upon the water, doubtless upon the dead bodies, anything. The world can rest upon dead bodies. That poor maniac, before he was called by grace, had his dwelling among the tombs, among dead things, dead people. But the dove returned unto Noah in the ark, returned. And isn't it sweet at times to return in experience? They "go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9) To come into the Sanctuary – O what a rest there is at times in the house of God! But you don't stay there; you go out into the conflicts and the responsibilities of the world and all those calamities; but it is a sweet experience to return. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Well, may the Lord grant that the experience of the text may be made a comfort, and that in it they may hear His voice: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Amen.