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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel Sunday morning
23rd June 1968

"Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth
as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the
earth. But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the
Lord; in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul
destitute."

Psalm 141 v 7-8.

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While you were singing that second hymn it was afresh impressed upon my mind that real religion is an experience. Study as long as you like the letter of the truth, you will never know it savingly. You look at those precious Beatitudes in the 5th Matthew, you can go to a College for forty years, you will never know, never learn to be poor in spirit, you will never learn what it is to be a mourner, you will never learn to hunger and thirst after righteousness. I feel that it is one thing that has been bored into my very being and that by being brought into an absolute condition of destitution in myself, completely, that is in a spiritual way.

I suppose every natural science can be attained by dint of human study. Each in their own department, whether it is a skilled tradesman, carpenter, or whatever it may be, everything of a natural kind is attained by a natural mind; but immediately you step out from the things that are natural, we shall be taught we can do nothing, nothing. Not only do nothing, but that we have nothing, and worse than nothing. I believe every word I say because I have been brought there.

You may be the wisest man on earth, if you are called by grace you will know what it is to be a fool that you may be wise. The Church at Laodicea thought she was rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing, and that is what people think generally. When their eyes are opened they know this, "Ye are poor and miserable, wretched, blind and naked". The thing is, do we know it? I say you will not learn these things as a school boy learns his task, but it is very solemn teaching when you come to things spiritual. All that belongs to us from a spiritual point of view is sin, death, hell and destruction. Nothing else, nothing, and this will make a poor sinner cry when he knows the Lord: I cry unto Thee, make haste unto me, give ear to my voice when I cry unto Thee. That is not notion, it is not acquired, it is the life of God in the soul. The kind of religion that is despised by a Pharisee. "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice". He could not be satisfied unless his prayer entered into heaven, unless it prevailed through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here was mighty faith in a poor sinner, feeling his destitution but crying unto the Lord. A knowledge of Him here. You will never cry unto the Lord unless you know Him. You may not feel you know Him, you may feel completely ignorant of Him, But if you ever cry to Him and examine that cry, there is a reason for it, and it is the same reason why a new born babe cries, it is alive, It does not know much about what it is crying for, but it has a need, it has hunger, it must live and therefore it must cry. These are simple things but they are vital. There is a volume of religion without this in it my friends.

"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips", What did he pray that for? You may depend upon it and doubtless many of us have known what it is by speaking unadvisedly with our lips, what trouble we have brought upon our heads. I think sometimes we do not often enough read the 3rd chapter of James about the tongue. O the damage it has done, and done to ourselves, an unwary remark, some word, why my friends you could destroy in five minutes the labour of forty years. David knew it, he knew it when he said in the 31st Psalm: "I am like a broken vessel", that is a very valuable, that has been on the mantel shelf, been admired and taken great care of, presently somebody

dusting that mantel shelf, knocks it off, smashes it to pieces, throws it in the dustbin; "I am like a broken vessel". I say, my friends, with the tongue we can destroy what we have laboured to do for many years. These things, as they are exercised in our soul in the fear of God, they will make us tender, tender of each other.

"Incline not my heart to any evil thing to practice wicked works with men that work iniquities, and let me not eat of their dainties". O this does show a tender fear of God. I wish I could live like it. O how we have to prove with Paul, "The things that I would, that I do not, the things that I would not that I do, O wretched man that I am". That is the confession of a living soul. It is a mystery. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness". O to be thus humbled and so broken and contrite that you would not speak a word against any and be willing if smitten on one cheek to turn the other also. I mean this is a standard of the Word of God and I do feel to need it pressed home from time to time. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness", Is it? How much smiting do we bear? How easily we are offended. "Let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head", That is love.

"Love all defects supplies
Makes great obstructions small"

For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. "Our bones are scattered at the graves mouth as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth." The Psalmist uses this as an illustration of his felt condition. Bones, not the flesh. If the flesh is wounded you can bind it up and most probably proceed on your journey, but if you break any bones you can proceed no further. Bones are the framework of the body, if you remove the bones you have got no stay, no support, and this he felt with respect to his soul and doubtless to his circumstances, for David had many trials. He had afflictions, and oppositions, and persecutions in his own house. He was a man of conflict, of war, and when he came to his end he said, "Although my house be not so with God", he had the grace of God, he was a man of God, a man after God's own heart, and therefore, he felt these things as a man in the fear of God feels them: "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure".

"Our bones are scattered at the graves mouths as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth", that is, stroke upon stroke. As one lifts an axe to cut down a tree or to cleave wood and the splinters fly here and there, so at this time David felt that his soul, his circumstances were in that scattered, weakened, driven, afflicted condition. This will apply to the Lord's people in His various dealings with them. Sometimes their very providences are so scattered as by stroke upon stroke, or as David said in another place, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts", so everything seems to be scattered and it was scattered at the graves mouth, ready to be buried, a sense of despair. Some of you may be passing through things now, do you feel with respect to your poor body and with respect to your providences brought into the depths, the water floods threaten to overflow you and it seems as though things are ready to be buried? Now this is teaching. This is being led forth by the right way to heaven. You remember in the 28th Job. Job there speaks of a way, a path, "A path which the vultures eye hath not seen"; "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, which the vultures eye hath not seen, lion's whelps have not trodden it nor the fierce lion past by it"; and that path spiritually is the secret path through the wilderness to heaven. It is a path traced out in the 107th Psalm; the entrance into that path is regeneration and the outcome of that path is eternal glory. But look what there is between. There are the floods: "He bindeth the floods from overflowing and the thing that is hid bringeth He forth to the light", and so if we are in the footsteps of the flock we shall know what it is to have everything scattered, to depend upon nothing. Compelled to flee for refuge unto God Himself.

You may feel also that the very bones of your religion are scattered at the graves mouth, your poor prayers. "Like a crane or a

swallow, so did I chatter". Everything. You cannot put things together, you cannot make anything of yourself, you look back at your profession and you feel the beginning was wrong, everything is out of joint. "Our bones are scattered at the graves mouth as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth", there is no order, and even in your religion your mind may be so agitated, so driven with a multitude of thoughts, you wonder where the scene will end. You come to a service and you feel too agitated to listen. Well, one would hardly think that this is the leading of the Holy Spirit, but it is. It is discipline, and "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest and teachest him out of Thy law, that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity while a pit is being dug for the wicked", and while the Lord is shaking His people to pieces, while He is bringing them into darkness and not into light, while He is turning them to destruction, emptying them from vessel to vessel in order that they may be sanctified and made white and tried, while this is going on there is a pit being dug for the wicked; those that are spreading themselves like a green bay tree.

"Our bones are scattered at the graves mouth as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth"; and so the Lord will try His people. He does not leave ministers alone either. He will make them feel their ministry is scattered at the graves mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth, cannot put anything together in a sermon, don't know what to make of a text, don't know where to find one from Genesis to Revelation, the whole thing is scattered. Ah my friends, if we begin to glory in ourselves the Lord knows how to bring us down, and this is wisdom, this is because He is a God of judgement, He judges His people and the mercy of it is He knows His people individually, He knows exactly your case, He knows your besetments, He knows your life, and He is a God of judgement. He knows how to deal with each case. He does not deal with everybody alike and therefore, in conviction He exercises His divine sovereign grace, it is the same grace, but how different was His dealing with Lydia and Ruth from that of Saul of Tarsus. It was the same God, the same salvation, the same grace. Therefore, if there are any of you that are brought really to mourn, to feel this morning broken to pieces, wounded, robbed and half dead, you will have a companion in the Word of God, it is good to find a companion, you will walk with them. Have you ever found one in the Scriptures and walked with them and talked with them and their conversation in the Word of God is by divine inspiration, and you feel your heart kindle toward them and sometimes it will bring your poor scattered bones together and raise you up out of the dust and the sun will break through the clouds and give you a sweet surprise; and when you find a companion in those that fear God and that their language is your language, their confession your confession, their desires your desires, why it will so strengthen your hope that you will find unexpectedly in your heart singing,

"Thou givest me the lot,
Of those that fear Thy name;
If endless bliss be their reward
I shall possess the same".

So you begin to rise; then you will know the interpretation of this text in Ezekiel, those dry bones, they came to this conclusion, we have come to conclusions, but they are wrong, blessed be God; They said, "Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts. Prophecy Son of Man"; that is, preach, preach to the people that are in that condition, preach to the people whose bones are broken and scattered and say unto them: "O my people", O what a word to hear, for the Lord to say to you when you are ready to be buried, dead, shut up, shut out, for Him to say "O my people, I will open your graves", and not leave you there, but "Bring you up out of your graves".

Well, this is a peculiar language, a foreign language to everyone that is not taught of God. But says Paul: "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God".

"Our bones are scattered at the graves mouth, as when one
cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth". Is that the finish of it ?
Did they lie down in self pity and give up ? they would do, except
for one thing, the life of God in the soul. You cannot kill it.
O I should be thankful to have a spark, it will never go out, and
this spark seems to brighten up, and shine forth, the deeper the
darkness, the heavier the trial, the deeper the waters, the hotter
the furnace, "But my eyes are unto Thee O God the Lord". There is not
one who is being led of the Spirit who does not know what this is.
.. "Our eyes", "But", we must not leave out that word "But", it is
the same as the word yet, notwithstanding our scattered condition,
notwithstanding the grave's mouth is opened, yet our eyes are unto
Thee O God the Lord. He describes the glorious Object of faith,
"O God, the Lord", as much as to say the grave and scattered bones, and
dry bones, are nothing to Thee. "Our eyes are unto Thee".

In the 25th Psalm David said, "Mine eyes are ever toward the
Lord", and there is a sense in which faith is ever Godward. You may not
be conscious of it, you must go on your various ways of duties, but
every circumstance will draw out that faith and immediately that
faith will be fixed upon this sovereign, eternal, omnipotent,
immutable God, and there ~~xxxxxx~~, you fix and comfort take. Here is
the Rock, here is the Foundation, but we need these eyes, they are not
natural eyes, they are the eyes of faith, and the eyes of faith alone
can see those things which are eternal and unseen to the natural eye.
It is very blessed, very mysterious to have that inward eye that looks
through, up and beyond all the things of sense and reason. Sense and
reason are necessary to the things of this life, but salvation is a
different matter, of a different nature altogether, and the things of
God are hid from the wise and prudent, they cannot possibly see them,
they cannot possibly find them: "The natural man cannot receive the
things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither
can he know them because they are spiritually discerned". Those are
truths, we shall learn them. It is a truth though perhaps little
discerned and only discerned by a spiritual mind, that the things of
the Spirit are utterly unknown and unknowable to a natural man. It
is a mercy if we know them by divine teaching.

"But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord". So he describes
this Object of faith, it is God the Lord, otherwise it would be
useless. So that this faith believes that God is. A very solemn
trembling knowledge it is. You tremble and rejoice if you know Him,
and have felt something upon your heart of His divine majesty and
holiness and glory.

In Isaiah's day they came much into this condition; they said,
"My way is hid from the Lord and my judgement is passed over from
my God". What a good thing the Scriptures do reveal those secret
sorrows, exercises, and conflicts of the living in Jerusalem, that is,
although they felt that was their conclusion, it was a wrong conclusion,
and the Lord brought them really to the 8th verse: 'Why do you say
that ?' "Hast thou not known that the Lord, the Creator of the ends
of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of
His understanding, He giveth power to the faint and to them that
have no might He increaseth strength". Now you look at those
Scriptures, you can read them and remember them, but you look at them
and if you are brought into a condition, brought to need them, O
the power, the vitality. This is God, "the Creator of the ends of the
earth.. there is no searching of His understanding", and you will
trace it in all your affairs, in all your providential movements, in
all the exercises of your soul. "O the depth of the riches, both of
the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgements,
and His ways passed finding out", and this is how we shall learn
it. It brings us to a knowledge of that great God.

Now David here would never have thus cried unto Him and lifted
up his eyes to Him except he had come into this scattered, ruined,
distressed condition of soul. "But my eyes are unto Thee, O God

the Lord, in Thee is my trust", and the Lord knows those that trust in Him. "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble and He knoweth those that trust in Him". How does He know them? He knows them because He knows everything and knows everybody, but He knows them in a different way from that of how He knows those that trust in Him. Why? Because in their trust they come to Him. You have got a banking account, how does the Bank know that you trust the Bank? because you bring your money to it, trust your money with them, and the Lord knows those that trust in Him, who come to Him, who do business with Him; "The merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of gold"; and you do business with Him and He knows you trust in Him. Bring to Him all your cases, cares, bring all your difficulties to Him to solve, all your hard questions to Him to answer; and He comes, sometimes, He steps right into the midst of all your scattered, ruined, distressed condition, and holds up His mighty hand and says: "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for Me?" It is a challenge of mercy and love. As though He would say to His people, you try it, you see if you can bring anything to Me that is too hard.

"Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth as when one heweth and cleaveth wood upon the earth", but, but that is not all. O you may look at your scattered things, you may look at the Nation look at the bones of the Nation, scattered at the very graves mouth, but as you stand in the midst of these scattered things, faith looks up, up, beyond and through it all and gets a glimpse of Him Who sits upon the circle of the earth, "The inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers". Then you can rest, you can then leave everything in His hands and say, "In Thee O Lord is my trust, my times are in Thy hands".

"But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord, in Thee is my trust", and this is the prayer, "Leave not my soul destitute." Well, this is the prayer of the destitute. He will hear the prayer of the destitute, they are not destitute really, otherwise they would never pray. They feel their destitution, and this is by the teaching of the Spirit. I feel persuaded that if the Lord Jesus, Who condescended, Who was rich, rich because He was God, because all things are His, rich in His infinite wisdom, yet became poor, that His poor people might be made rich. - You may depend upon it, He will bring you to destitution before He gives you His riches. He will bring you to death until He quickens you into life. "Leave not my soul destitute". Destitution in its absolute form is death. Nothing more destitute than death. You look upon a corpse, completely destitute. Nothing. Have you felt that in your soul? As destitute spiritually as a corpse is naturally? What then? Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the whole kingdom of heaven. They are destitute in themselves, but the whole kingdom of Christ in the Gospel, it is all theirs. This is the way He makes poor people rich.

"Leave not my soul destitute" of life. I believe everyone of His people pray this prayer, this prayer and that of the publican, I pray more often than anything else: "Leave not my soul destitute.. God be merciful to me a sinner". The Pharisee would have said, well, you have not got very far yet, but if you have got as far as that you have got further than he has. O to have that little that a righteous man hath which is better than the riches of many wicked.

"Leave not my soul destitute" of the life of God. You cannot learn it, we shall have to come back to that, you cannot learn life. You can study all your life, you could learn so as to the letter of truth, but you cannot learn so as that learning would produce life in your soul. "Leave not my soul destitute" of grace, of grace. You know what sin is. There is only one thing greater than sin and that is grace, and there is a promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace". The beginning of that promise was sin, the end of it grace. "Leave not my soul destitute" of grace. Grace, infinitely greater than sin.

Leave not my soul destitute of the fear of God. I would say this, my friends, that you cannot have one grace of the Spirit without you have them all. You cannot have some and not others. If you have got a single grace of the Spirit you have it all. You cannot have a little of Christ. If you have a little of Him, you have all of Him. That is a mercy. Have you got a little? Have you got enough life to cry? It is eternal life if you have. The thing is to have the real thing, as we were saying lately about Paul and the Philippians: "Being confident of this very thing", not an imitation life, but the very life of God, grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fear of God, O that precious fear! O what a preservative it is! If it was in exercise how much trouble would it have saved us. How it touches the tongue, the mind, the heart, the affections. Well, leave not my soul destitute of the fear of God.

Leave not my soul destitute of Christ's atonement, destitute of the virtue, the pardoning, cleansing, healing power of the blood of Christ. "Leave not my soul destitute".

Well, here is a text, it begins with a poor, broken down sinner, and the answer to this prayer are the whole riches of grace, the whole of the gracious Gospel. Well, may the Lord grant us the teaching of His Holy Spirit.

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).