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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden At Galeed Chapel Brighton
Sunday morning, 9th June 1968

"Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; O bring Thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins."

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Psalm 25 v 16 - 18.

The whole Psalm is a prayer. Do you find from time to time the Psalms express your feelings? as though they were your own prayers? There is something very sweet and confirming in that. They speak for you. Express just what is in your longing heart. The grace that is noticeable throughout this Psalm is the fear of God, and the attitude and direction of the Psalmist's soul we have in the 1st verse. This is his attitude throughout the whole of this prayer: "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul". There is the Object of prayer, the Object of faith, and what a sight that is to the Lord Jesus. It reminds us of that word in Solomon's Song: "O my dove that art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see Thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely". That is what the Lord sees in a poor sinner at the throne of grace, lifting up his soul. It is not so much his body, it is his soul. That wisdom which is from above and the grace of God and faith in the Psalmist's heart had made his soul to be of greater importance than his body. Had made eternity greater than time. He was before God.

Now what a mercy whenever we are brought into that and position and attitude before God. O how then we are enabled to cast all our cares and our bodies upon Him. It is a safe place, my friends, in trouble. If we can get there we are safe, and cleave unto Him though prostrate in the dust.

David, as it is in the introduction, has great confidence in prayer. His confidence in prayer is his confidence in God, his faith in God; believing with Job, "O God, I know that Thou canst do everything". Wonderful to have a God given faith that really believes that He is. It is very solemn to be left with just an historical acquaintance with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, no life, no power, no influence in it. But O the life of the Psalmist as manifest in these Psalms!

"O my God, I trust in Thee, let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me"; and not only so, he was made teachable. It is sinners that are teachable. Those who have been taught their sinnership, convinced of their state before God; and so David prays, "Show me Thy ways O Lord, teach me Thy paths". He had a true heart. You can almost see in the precious Psalms the inward grace and humility of David. But what a blessing my friends to be brought here, out from the midst of confusion. I have thought of that word to David when he sinned in numbering the people and by his sin he brought the judgement of God upon the people, and it was a heavy burden because those people were innocent, he had sinned, and he said: "I am in a great straight". It is a good thing he was. He was not when he numbered the people, he was walking in pride. But what a mercy the Lord can bring down high looks and pride. "I am in a great straight, let me now fall into the hands of God for great are His mercies, let me not fall into the hands of man". So you will see this is the exercise of sinners in the midst of troubles. He is teachable, he is willing to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus and learn of Him Who is meek and lowly in heart, and it is the only place where you will find rest for your troubled soul. But he does not leave out sin. "Remember not

the sins of my youth nor my transgressions". The remembrance of the sins of our youth is very painful. Perhaps some of you have looked back and really have been so overwhelmed and covered with shame and confusion that you really wonder whether your sins will ever be blotted out. But here he comes in all the honesty of the fear of God. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions, according to Thy mercies remember Thou me for Thy goodness sake, O Lord." You see he is before that blessed Lord, that Mediator, that Intercessor, and there he can make his worst condition known; and just upon this point of this prayer in the Psalm it reminds us of the opening of David's confession in the 51st Psalm. O my friends it is wonderful that he could ever pray again. I have got no stones to throw at David, but O he was in a great straight, burdened with guilt, full of trouble and confusion he was, and yet he saw a door of hope in Christ.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions". He did not say according to the multitude of my transgressions blot them out, that would have been adequate, but he went further: "According to the multitude of Thy mercies", they are many more than my transgressions and O how good it is even to feel that your transgressions are innumerable, but the multitude of God's mercy are more than the innumerable sins of His people. They cannot number them but He can and has, and that number was cast upon Him: For the Lord has laid upon Him the innumerable iniquities of us all; and so he goes through the Psalm, until he comes to the text:

"Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me". It is very evident that the Lord was turning away from him otherwise there would have been no point in his prayer, "Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me". Now that is a point in a sinner's labouring, wrestling, with the Lord in the midst of sins and woes and trials. Do you know what it is to feel the Lord has turned away from you? and do you wrestle at the throne of grace for Him to turn to you if He has turned away from you? His face is turned away from you, His eyes are not upon you, His lips do not speak to you, His ears do not hear your prayers. It needs great faith to cleave to the Lord with His back to you, and especially if He convinces you that the secret of it is that you have turned your back on Him. "Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me". That is the only ground upon which a sinner can stand, but a sinner is brought there by divine grace and divine discipline. O he is brought to stand upon no other ground but the mercy of God and there is a lot to be destroyed before you get there. All your excuses are taken out of your mouth. Some of you know what it is that you would not have your sins excused if you could, you want them blotted out.

"Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me". Mercy is free. The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, the mercy of the Lord reacheth unto the clouds. It is divine mercy, and it is mercy joined with power. It is not helpless mercy. Human mercy is often very helpless. Very poignant to see mercy looking at a poor victim, helpless mercy, unable to help. Very pitiful it is to see a Mother watching an infant die; mercy there, but no power. But the mercy of God is joined, joined with power and what an attraction that is to a poor troubled sinner. He is trying to pull, if I might so speak with reverence, he is trying to pull the Lord, to turn Him to himself and show him mercy. Everything is in mercy, the whole Gospel is in mercy. The love of God is in mercy, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is in mercy. The Holy Ghost conveys mercy, everything is in it.

"Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me". "For I am desolate and afflicted". That is why he prays. A person that is neither desolate nor afflicted does not need any mercy and we shall be brought to need what we pray for if we pray in sincerity and in truth. O what a lot of formal prayers we pray! I was thinking of it some long time ago in the night, O the formal prayers. It is

really true what we sometimes sing:

"Few, if any come to Jesus
'Til reduced to self-despair."

Self-despair is a blessing. I know some of you and perhaps you young people say, I don't think so, but you may be brought to know it. Self-despair is the beginning of a good hope through grace. O self, self, a mercy to have despair of self. "My heart and my flesh faileth". Not only naturally, physically, but one taught of God will find that all natural heart and natural flesh fails, will see the end of all perfection in the flesh, but then to see the fulness of perfection in the Redeemer.

"Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted"; both. It is very sad to be desolate, but to be desolate and afflicted is a poor case, and ~~is~~ the Lord brings His people into sore cases, though strictly speaking they bring themselves there - I often have to change that Scripture, you might say you ought not to alter the Word of God, well, I don't except this, "I was brought low and He helped me", but I have to say, "I have brought myself low and He helped me."

Desolate, desolate and afflicted. Who is he before, what does he see in the Lord? No desolation there, no death there, no decay there. He is looking out of desolation at the Tree of Life, this fruitful Tree. He is looking at the very opposite from what he is in himself and believes by faith that it is possible to partake of Christ, and to receive from Him everything that we are destitute ~~of~~ in ourselves, and that is prayer. "For I am desolate and afflicted". Desolate includes destitution. Desolate also has in it solitariness and you will be solitary when you come to these places. It is good at times to be alone and solitary, because this is a case of trouble out of which none but God can deliver. Therefore, we read, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God". Well, we cannot comfort anybody else because the kind of comfort that the Lord has to bestow is of no use to the world, to one who is in nature. So it is a mercy to be in trouble that nobody can get you out of but God, and we shall come there. Desolate. Without a friend. Job says in the opening of the 5th chapter, "To which of the Saints will ye turn?" Well, if we are wise we will not turn to any of them, and if we are in a case like this, desolate and afflicted, we ~~sh~~ shall find it is no use to turn to them. But he showed a better way: "I would seek unto the Lord and unto God would I commit my cause that doeth great things and unsearchable." Nobody else can. So "I will order my cause before Him".

"Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me for I am desolate and afflicted". This desolation, you cannot sing it away, you cannot talk it away, you cannot read it away. There is only one way that a poor desolate sinner can be comforted and that is the answer to this prayer, for the Lord to turn. "Turn us again, O Lord, God, cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved." He knew that, he knew if the Lord turned and caused His face to shine he would be saved. There was hope there. O what hope there is in some poor sinners in the very depths, in the low dungeon, in the lion's den. These are the places where people pray. "Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me for I am desolate and afflicted". Afflicted with sin. That is the affliction, that is the disease. I know there is also physical affliction, and I would not speak lightly of them, indeed I would not; and it will take those in, I believe there are many of the Lord's people in hospital wards have felt desolate and afflicted, barren in their souls and no company. Just desolate and in the midst of affliction. It is a mercy my friends, that nobody can shut the door of your heart. You may be in a crowd, some of you may have known that, you may be going along the Western Road, seething with people, and your heart up unto the Lord and very likely praying this prayer for substance, if not in words, "Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me" for although I am among this multitude of people, I am desolate and afflicted and therefore, the whole thing is summed up in what we sometimes sing:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
All in all in Thee I find".

Well, so far as I know, that is an evidence of the life of God in the soul. An evidence of a living faith. Let us pause, just for a moment and look at the 16th verse. I have not been able, I have not got the ability to say much about it, but look at it and then look at yourself and see whether you have any evidence of this life. This life of prayer, this prayer of faith, in your experience. It is confirming if you can, that is one way whereby you can work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. To compare, in the light of the Spirit, what is going on in your heart by what is recorded in the Word of God. "The troubles of my heart are enlarged". In the 138th Psalm we read this, "Thou hast enlarged my heart when I was in distress". Very wonderful. You would almost expect it to be, 'Thou hast enlarged my heart when I was rejoicing in the light of Thy countenance', but "Thou hast enlarged my heart when I was in distress". The Lord makes use of His judgements. "Let Thy judgements help me". Perhaps some of you have known, I believe in my little way I have known and felt some of my worst calamities and afflictions, felt them working inside according to that word: "Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed", because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart.

"The troubles of my heart are enlarged". It is all his heart. If we have a real vital religion, it will all be in your heart, the trouble will be in your heart. It is a mercy to have the right kind of trouble, peculiar troubles. The Lord's people are peculiar people, they have got a peculiar religion, they pray peculiar prayers, they sing peculiar hymns, they preach peculiar sermons, they have peculiar troubles, they have peculiar joys. "The troubles of my heart are enlarged". Increased. Job says, "I am full of confusion and it increaseth". Why my friends, there are times when we are in such a tangle, in such a straight, in such trouble, in such distress, that we are in utter confusion and yet you will find in the Word of God those who have been in exactly the same place and this is the way to prove divine inspiration. You have proved the inspiration of the Word of God by your own experience.

"The troubles of my heart are enlarged". "O bring thou me out of my distresses." You see a poor trembling sinner, cannot live upon his desolation, cannot live upon his afflictions, he cannot live upon his troubles, must have deliverance, and there is nothing that can take the place of deliverance. I have felt this in my own case; and if you have a real pressing case, if you know what it is to sink and sink and sink in deep mire where there is no standing, there is only one word that will be adequate to that condition, and that is deliverance. It is a mercy to have a help, it is a mercy to be sustained, but you must have deliverance. We read in another Psalm, that "In Zion the Lord both commands a blessing and He commands deliverances for Jacob", and so you will pray. You pray for what He has promised:

"What Thou hast promised I implore"

and yet all the while you feel your utter unworthiness. But faith will esteem the ability and power and sovereignty of God, above his unworthiness. We shall know our unworthiness my friends, faith will not allow us to honour our unworthiness beyond and above the all-sufficiency of God's grace. We want to beware how we talk about our unworthiness, because our hearts are very deceitful. If you are so unworthy that you are too unworthy to pray, I do not want your unworthiness, it is pride. But if you feel your unworthiness of the least of His mercies, and yet view Him, by faith, as a great Saviour, see and believe what is written in the Scriptures: "Seeing therefore, we have a great high Priest that is entered into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly.." Do you say I am too unworthy to pray? That is not the humility of the Spirit, that is a voluntary humility which is an abomination to God. But there are humble souls that seek salvation.

"The troubles of my heart are enlarged, O bring Thou me out of my distresses". Job, he always comes into a troubled path, he had three friends, I believe those three men were godly men, but they were not deeply taught men. They spoke some very good things, but they did not understand the Lord's dealings with Job. He dealt with him so

severely, He shook him to pieces, that they thought there must be some secret thing with Job, an extraordinary sinner, for the Lord to deal with him like that, so they misunderstood him and Job was under that affliction of being misunderstood by his dearest friends. But it was sanctified. It made him seek alone unto God. He said of others, miserable comforters are ye all, one thing alone would satisfy Job: "O that I knew where I might find Him".

Do you think we are speaking the truth? Are you a foreigner to this language? Do you know this language in your heart? If so, then there is reason to hope that you are "No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God". "Turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged, O bring Thou me out of my distresses. Look upon my affliction and my pains, and forgive all my sins". There is a point to be noticed in this 18th verse. He does not say look upon my affliction and my pains and look upon my sins, Lord, Thou knowest how long it is necessary to keep me in that furnace, in that fire, under those chastenings, those pains, but, do look upon them Lord, give to me to realise that Thou art acquainted with my afflictions and my pains, but don't look upon my sins, forgive them, it would not be enough for the Lord to look upon his sins.

There is something very blessed about the tenderness of David in this Psalm. Look upon my afflictions and my pain; well, afflictions and pain are the lot of mankind, but then affliction and pain is sanctified to the Lord's people. They may be suffering from the same disease, the Lord's people suffer the same pains, but look at the language, look how it is pressed as it were; these afflictions and pains and calamities and distresses and desolations, how it is pressing, by the Spirit, the very essence of life out of the soul, presses life, and living prayer. I have said sometimes, and I believe it is true, that there is a clearer evidence of faith under pressure, under load, in the deep waters, through the fiery furnace, than there is when one is enjoying the light of God's countenance. I know that is more pleasant, it is indeed blessed for faith to bask in the sunshine of the Son of Righteousness, but, O look at faith, look at faith struggling and labouring, "Though damped it never dies", and it is very sweet to feel it. You can feel that inward mysterious faculty of faith struggling toward God, have you not felt it? you can feel something in you and I would speak reverently, but in many places in the Word of God it is compared to a woman in travail. It is an inward labour.

"Look upon my affliction and my pain and forgive all my sins". All my sins, not all of them except one. I do not want to speak about myself, it would not be worth it, but I remember many years ago in the middle of the night I had a spirit of confession and solemn conviction of sin and I was enabled to confess sin for a long time, and at the end I said, Lord, find the last one, the last one. Say unto my soul, "Thy sins, which are many, are ALL forgiven". O that MANY and that ALL, how they meet.

"Look upon my affliction and my pain and forgive all my sins", and it is a relief when a poor sinner realises that sin is pardonable. Before it is pardoned, to realise it is pardonable, O that will help you to pray for pardon, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins". It is through this Man. O the ingredients of divine pardon! contains in it all the very essence of the Gospel. Pardon is salvation. It is the only thing that God sent His Son into the world for and, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is what He came for. He came to fulfil the law. As sinners we are under His curse, but He was made a curse. In the pardon of sins there is that great transaction of a Substitute. "He hath made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". O what a

consolation ! not in the righteousness of an angel, but in the righteousness of God in Him.

Well, it is a precious Psalm. A Psalm for troubled sinners, a troubled people, those who have nothing more to say than did Hezekiah. "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me", and you will go on in that chapter that you are well acquainted with, and find Hezekiah said in reflection, why, He was ready to save me, when I was in distress, when I was oppressed, when I had the sentence of death, if I only knew it, He was ready to save me.

"Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins".

Amen.