

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel,
Brighton, Sunday morning 20th March 1966

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me;
for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed, but
Thou, O Lord, how long?" Return, O Lord, deliver my soul:
O save me for Thy mercies' sake."

Psalm 6 v 2-4.

You would hardly think that the man in the text was the same man that went forth with a sling and five stones and slew Goliath. You would hardly think this to be the same man that slew a lion and a bear, but it was; and here is a prayer of faith, and evidently the Psalmist was under some chastening of the Lord. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure." In the 5th Psalm David said, "My sin is ever before me". The Lord forgave David his sins, especially those great sins, but David never forgave himself. That may interpret some of your experience, for the heart knows its own bitterness. In the prayer of the dedication of the Temple Solomon anticipated such cases as those who knew their own grief, and their own sore. Doubtless there are those who have heart scars and wounds that are only known between God and their soul.

And therefore, David, he comes to the Lord on the ground of mercy. It is outstanding in David's history and in the Psalms. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak". In these four first verses he uses that exclamation, "O Lord", I think five times. He is before the Lord and before nobody else, and it is a great thing in experience to be brought off from all other helps. We shall as we find them fail. As with the woman with an issue of blood, she tried every physician but got worse rather than better; and the Lord's dealings with us will have that tendency, to separate us from all and bring us to realise that except the Rock of Ages all other ground is sinking sand. It is a real experience and yet there is a peculiarity about it, there is something so wholesome. Perhaps you will not understand me, but to realise in your own case, your own soul, that everything in you and everything about you is sinking except Christ and His everlasting Gospel, and this will bring us to weakness in ourselves.

"Have mercy upon me", O Jehovah. He saw in the Infinite God the fullness of salvation in its completeness. Has that word salvation been made to you more than a word? O for a sinner whose sins have covered and filled him, to be brought by the Spirit before that one great word, that work, Salvation, and before Him Who is the eternal author of salvation! Everything that is saving is in Christ Jesus. A fullness of grace, a fullness of mercy, of unsearchable riches, a fullness of power and of strength and of grace.

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord: for I am weak". Here is a strong man, any other, however strong they may think they are, are weak. Here is the secret of real strength, to be brought before this infinite, omnipotent God in all our own weakness. To be brought to nothing and to worse than nothing in ourselves, and for the Holy Ghost to reveal that Man of God's right hand, that Son of Man Whom He made strong for Himself, and say in your poor, weak, trembling heart, "I have laid help upon One that is Mighty; and that gives the secret, "When I am weak, then am I strong", and the Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. That is a wonderful Scripture, the power of God made perfect in weakness. There is a sense in which it would not be made perfect where there is strength. We need much teaching and grace to come before God with nothing. Legality cleaves to us like our skin, if we could be a little more strong, if we were not so completely ruined as we are, if we could find just something to make us a little more respectable to appear before God. But He won't have it. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak".

This is David, David of whom the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands". Here he is; "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak". Have you ever been weak? O what a mercy it is to be weak. It is painful. Paul, that strong Apostle, perhaps the greatest apostle, the greatest Saint that ever lived, he said to the church at Corinth, "I am with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling". Here is a strong man, all others are weak. There was a strong man that went to the temple to pray. He had not got strength enough to lift up his eyes to heaven, he was bowed down greatly, smote upon his breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner". There was a strong man. There was the Pharisee, strong in self, in his self confidence, he took everything with him, his wisdom with him, he needed nothing. He felt he was increased with goods and had need of nothing, he did look a fine man, a strong man, but he was weak. The Pharisee was weak, the Publican was strong. Have you ever been weak? so as to fall upon the mercy of God?

What weakens us? One thing that will weaken us is conviction of our sin. Ezra said, we are before Thee in our trespasses and we cannot stand before Thee because of this. Jeremiah, he said, "Though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake. O what evidences we have of out of weakness being made strong! Sometimes you may feel too weak to pray. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint". O you will be brought into circumstances and prove what we have often said, that vital religion is an experience in the heart, and you may be brought to such weakness as to be too weak to pray. Have you ever been there? It is a strong man that is brought there. "All my desire is before Thee", said this same blessed man, "And my groanings are not hid from Thee".

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak". My enemies are strong, unbelief in me is strong, carnality is a deadly foe within me, but I am weak. We would rather be strong, but there is a right way of being strong and it is through this weakness. So Paul, he admonished Timothy, "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus". Another thing may weaken us, we will have a thorn in the flesh, the Lord gave Paul that thorn in the flesh, and it was unless he should be exalted above measure because of that wonderful experience; he was transformed to the third heaven, he had to have a thorn in the flesh and he learned the text in that way. There is much teaching in being made weak. And he requested the thorn should be extracted three times, God answered his prayer, but not according to Paul's will, but "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness". O then, here is a man in whom the power of God is made perfect, and so He has promised to give power to those that have no might.

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak, O Lord, heal me". He was weak and wounded too, and these wounds were too deep for notions to heal. What a mercy it is to have a religion that God begins and not to go before Him. If we take up with religion the Lord will have nothing to do with it, or with us. If He wounds it is such a wound that He alone can heal. O how subtle is a superficial, notional religion, and such a religion needs entertainment. But if the Lord wounds our hearts with a deep wound of conviction we shall not get any healing by external things, we shall not be able to sing away our wounds. A social religion will not reach to the root of our trouble, what we shall need is the Gospel, salvation.

"O Lord, heal me". Well, do we need it? Those things we look at in salvation, we may not feel we have attained to a full assurance of faith, but when you look at such Scriptures as this, have you got the wound? are you weak? are your bones vexed? Are you in a condition suitable to the application of the truth? It is no small mercy to have a Spirit wrought need of the Gospel, of salvation, and if your need is the work of the Spirit that need will

not be the end, you will never be satisfied with need, but if it is a living need then you will press, "Urge your case through all unfitness, Sue it out, spurning doubt, the Holy Ghost your witness".

"O Lord, heal me". The precious blood of Christ has infallible healing virtue in it. I know you may feel at times, I have felt it and I have cause to feel it more than anybody else, that my sins are not only innumerable, it is not only the number of them, but the nature of them, so black. Like a deep stain in a piece of soft wood, it soaks right through. Saturated with it; and under that sense and feeling of it that word in the hymn has been very helpful,

"Can blood such horrid crimes atone?" Faith only can answer - Yes, blood so rich as Thine".

O sometimes it is a relief to know that there is a remedy in Christ for the uttermost of sinners. I know at times you will feel to be lower than the uttermost, but the Lord's arm is not shortened, He can reach beneath the uttermost, and save you, not only from the depths of sin and iniquity, but save you right up to the uttermost joys of heaven.

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me". In the days of His flesh He healed all those that had need of healing. He did not heal anybody else, and if any of you have need of healing, He is the same this morning as yesterday, and will be for ever. But O to touch Him by faith! We shall have to press through a crowd; but faith is invincible under the power of the Spirit. Sometimes your case will be so urgent that you will say within yourself, I must have Him, I must have Him or sink lower than the grave.

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me". What havoc unbelief makes in the heart. I suffer more now from unbelief than ever I did; you might say, well, then you ought to be ashamed of yourself. I am ashamed of myself, but it is true. I don't know if any of you find that you have a faith that completely subdues the power and being of unbelief in your heart. We have a carnal nature, it is in league with the devil, and unbelief, O what havoc, what wounds, what sword thrusts, how it leaves you sometimes like the poor man in the dust, wounded and half dead and robbed. "Heal me, for my bones are vexed". His bones. We read a good deal about bones in the Scriptures. David said, "As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me daily". Habakkuk said that "his belly trembled, rottenness entered into his bones". Jeremiah said, "My bones shake". But why bones? If you are on a journey, and we are if we are pilgrims, and you have a flesh wound you can bind up that wound and go on your way, but if your bones are broken, if you have as it were a sword in your bones, you are brought to a standstill, you are crippled, you cannot move, proceed. That is why he talks about bones. Bones to the body are the frame of the body. You may be reduced in flesh but if your bones are broken then you are brought to a standstill.

"O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed". And pain in the bones is very severe. So here is a poor, weak man, that has a soul disease, and he is crippled. O it is a wonder, wonder such people ever get to the end, but "the lame take the prey" What a paradox is a Christian to himself and what a paradox is his pathway. What is it for?, that no man should glory in men and is there not a beauty in it? and don't you feel the strength that comes out of it? I have sometimes thought that this way and method of teaching His people that all their weakness and their wounds and their afflictions, their down-sittings and fears is like a cantilever bridge so constructed that the more weight you bear upon it, it brings into action an upward thrust; and so some of you have felt that your strength comes out in a sense of your weakness. The healing power of the precious Gospel comes out from your sense of your deep wounds that sin has made.

"My soul is also sore vexed". It is to be noticed throughout the Psalms that David says very little about his body, he says very little

about the dignity of his own kingdom, but he speaks about his soul and about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. What a blessed example he is. There was a king with all his kingly authority, but O his life was a life of conflict, a life of soul exercise. "My soul is sore vexed". Vexed with the devil. Are you vexed with a devil? His fiery darts, his subtle temptations? "My soul is sore vexed" with unbelief as we have mentioned; O what a vexation to the soul is unbelief. My soul is sore vexed with carnality, a terrible disease, to feel to be earthy, to be unable to rise above the earth or to raise one holy thought. My soul is sore vexed, vexed with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, the pride of life. Sore vexed with the reproaches of the wicked, with a mocking Ishmael within. Sore vexed by those who say there is no help for him in God. Sore vexed when you are under persecution or in the midst of the water spouts of God, deep calling unto deep, soul sore vexed by those who say "Where is now thy God"? Where is He? you look at your circumstances, look at things all to pieces, look at your impossibilities, and God is silent, Where is He?

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak" "Have mercy upon me for my bones are vexed, my soul is also sore vexed," but this was the word that struck me, "But Thou, O Lord, how long?". You will find this expression in several places in the Psalms and to my mind there is a beauty in it, if I had but the ability to express it. Now you look at the first three verses and then this last part of the third verse; "O Lord, rebuke me, not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure, have mercy upon me O Lord, for I am weak, O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed, my soul is sore vexed", but this is the thing, Lord I wait for Thee, "But Thou, O Lord, how long?" I do not wait for anybody else,

"Seek my soul no other healing,
But in Jesus balmy blood".

"But Thou, O Lord, how long?" When Thou dost return everything will be right. I wish the Holy Spirit would bring the comfort of that word to those that are weak and wounded, sick and sore. It is a conclusion of faith. He has been speaking about himself, his weakness, his wounds, his distress, but he turns his eyes another way. "But Thou, O Lord, how long?" I wait for Thee. I see in Thee everything that can strengthen me, my faith and my hope. I see in Thee everything that can heal my soul. I see in Thee a righteousness that can cover every folly, every fault. I see in Thee infinite virtue, in Thy precious blood, that can make my black soul whiter than the snow. I see a fullness in Thee of patience, which would enable me to run with patience the remainder of the race set before me. "But Thou, O Lord, how long?". "But Thou", those two words, "But Thou", is set against everything else. Now you look at it in your own cases, I don't know what your case is, I don't know the condition of your soul, I don't know whether your bones are sore vexed, I don't know what condition you are in your circumstances, in your body, in your family, but these two words are set over against everything else, "But Thou". You look at it. Gather up everything that concerns you, not only what is known to other people, but what you know about yourself, and then look at these two words, "But Thou".

"But Thou, O Lord". Omniscience, omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable, everlasting, "But Thou". It reminds us of that gracious word in the 9th Hebrews, and there had been some expression of the deepness of sin, and its legality, but Paul comes to this, "How much more", "How much more". It is the same here, "But Thou". How poor, trembling sinners gather it up! I have felt this to be a relief, it gathers up the worst, and there will be a sense in which you will want to be as bad as you possibly are before God, gather up also all your sores and perplexities, responsibilities, cares, enemies and lay them at His feet, with these two words, "But Thou". There is the devil, "But Thou", There is my weakness, "But Thou", and Thy strength. Feel my ignorance, "But Thou" art infinite in wisdom.

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak". It is a blessed man. This is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart. "But Thou, O Lord, how long?". This is a waiting soul. It may be that it is just where some of you are. "How long wilt Thou forget me, for ever?, Is Thy mercy clean gone for ever? Wilt Thou be favourable no more?". How long, Lord? Evidently then the Lord had hid Himself from David. Return; it is a wonderful thing that the Lord does return. There are a thousand ways by which we can bring ourselves to the ends of the earth, and our iniquities, like the winds, carry us away from God, thousands of ways in which we thus depart from Him, but we can find no way in ourselves by which we can get back to Him, but O mercy cries return.

The 3rd chapter of Jeremiah is wonderful as I feel it with respect to this returning Lord. Jeremiah says there, "Proclaim these words towards the north and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou hast transgressed against the Lord Thy God". Only acknowledge. But we shall never return to the Lord 'til He turns us. Ephraim said, "Turn Thou me and I shall be turned". "Return O Lord, deliver my soul", deliver my soul from the powers of indwelling sin, deliver my soul from the depravity of my own nature, deliver my soul from the power of unbelief, deliver my soul from death, destruction and despair!

I think it is in the 34th Psalm, a sweet Psalm, I could commend it to you, to those who are truly in conflict in your soul. I believe in that Psalm we have the word deliverance four times. And if you come to an extremity there is only one word that will really be adequate to your state, and that is deliverance. You will be thankful for helps but that is not deliverance. If you were down in a pit you would be thankful for somebody to come along and let down to you a little food and bring you water, it would be an encouragement to you for a friend to come to the mouth of the pit and to speak words of comfort to you, but it would not be deliverance. Now are there not some of you to whom nothing can really be a consolation less than deliverance? Well, that is where I feel to be, "Deliver my soul". "O save me, for Thy mercies sake".

Well, it is not a very high flown religion this, a Pharisee would look down upon a man like this, but "The Lord loveth the righteous" and what a wonderful thing the Word of God does come because it is given by inspiration and reveals the very secrets of the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart of a sinner, so that as we read the Word of God, if we have the Spirit to search our own hearts, we shall be able to a great degree to know whether we are in the footsteps of the flock; and sometimes there will be such an encouragement, even a word like this, and with surprise you may find it singing in your heart spontaneously,

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

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).