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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning August 17th 1961

When my soul fainteth within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto
Thee; into Thine holy temple." Jonah 2:7

Jonah of course, as you know, was fleeing from the Lord, disobeyed His command, and was thrown overboard by the mariners as the confessed cause of the storm that struck the ship, and found himself in the depth. And he went down to the root of the mountains, the waves were wrapped about his head, and the waters closed him about, a hopeless condition. And no wonder that he fainted; he says, "The eaters compassed me about, even to the soul," and his soul was in this distressed and fainting condition.

Fainting is giving up; fainting is coming to the end of all resources. It results oftentimes in the soul from a sense of God's anger, and from fear, and from the presence of enemies, a sense almost of despair, fainting. Naturally, when people faint they give up, their powers are gone, and they are near oftentimes in that condition to an extremity. But here the soul is spoken of: "When my soul fainteth within me, I remembered the Lord."

To be faint in soul is to be deprived of sensible light. It is to be weak, weakened often, as I have said, through fear. Fear, it may be, of the punishment due to sin, fear because God is absent and because He is sensibly angry because the consciousness of guilt. O how many things bring on faintness of soul! Those who know their need of God, who have a soul with life in it, and God withholds His mercy, and convinces them of their innumerable sins and departures from Him, know what it is to feel faint, and weak, and weary. And faintness often comes on through tribulation and conflict, which wears the soul, and many defects which desolate the soul. But it was at that juncture, when he was ready to give up everything, he "remembered the Lord." Evidently, while he was fainting, there was no remembrance of the Lord lively in his soul. He was so wrapped about with waters and weeds, so burdened with guilt and darkness, so out of reach of help in himself, that he forgot the Lord, and seemed, as it were, cut off: "I said, I am cast out of Thy sight." He forgot the Lord, and yet the Lord must have reminded him, and thought upon him at that very juncture. He did not feel faint, nor give up.

The Lord knows where His people are. If some of you are ready to faint, have not a scrap of strength left in your soul, no courage, no light upon your soul, and lacking present assurance of your interest in salvation, with nothing present but trouble, mountains high, waters about you, helplessness – well, you will not faint. The Lord knows His people's condition, and how faint they are. He never goes too far. As you notice in the psalm read (107), over and over again the Lord allows a child of God to come into a condition, often sin-procured, of helplessness and trouble. And then, when at his wits' end, there is something enables him to look up and cry to the Lord. O what a mercy it is the Lord always sees His people when they see not Him, and remembers them when they forget Him! His faithfulness in this is wonderful, but it is a solemn experience, exceeding solemn to be brought off from all resources. You see, Jonah had no one about him to help him. He could not look for human help, nor could he help himself, and that made him faint. It will make a person faint, as in

the case of David in Psalm 142. He said: "Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." (Psalm 142:4) And a solemn place to be in, but the very place where the Lord is needed; and when, as in Jonah's case, the memory is revived, a touch from heaven is felt, that is made effectual. "I remembered the Lord." And the consequence of that – instead of fainting, he cried.

"Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight: yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." It was a direction in his soul. He was revived inwardly to look through all the depths of waters with which he was surrounded and enclosed to the Lord's holy temple, and he sent up a cry. No one can express the relief that it is for a poor sinner, when really at his wits' end and ready to faint with fear, with weariness, with weakness through conflict, and by the burden of guilt, he is enabled to remember the Lord. It is a remembrance accompanied or followed by a real cry going out to the Lord in all earnestness for His help and deliverance. "I remembered the Lord."

And this remembrance of the Lord is really a manifestation of Him brought fresh into the heart. It is wonderful how, even after many years of experience and some blessing, a sinful worm finds himself in this condition without power to feelingly believe in anything. As if the Lord is so absolutely absent and almost forgotten, and prayer therefore is an impossibility, so preoccupied with your condition of faintness, and then that secret help is granted whereby the mind is drawn up to the Lord, the Lord God, the Lord Jesus, and the way to Him and where He dwells on high above all the floods. And there was real union between Jonah in these depths in the belly of hell, and the Lord whom he remembered, because the Lord brought Him to his remembrance. O the connection between the people of God and their Lord can never really be broken, though they often feel as he did, cast out of His sight and without any reserves, no strength. "I remembered the Lord."

In some particulars let us notice this remembrance. First of all, who He is, Jehovah Jesus, the Almighty Saviour, the ever-living Christ, the Conqueror of sin, death and hell, enthroned above on the mercy seat, with all power in heaven and in earth. If I may so speak, the existence of the Lord Jesus, and all that He is in His infinite virtue and merit, seems out of mind at times when we are in trouble, as if there were no such Person, dejected we get, and when in that condition Satan is busy with our own unbelief. But when there is this remembrance, brought again into the hearts, and the Lord Jesus is again real to us, why, there is an invincible power in that, that puts into the heart something that is enabled to send a message, send a cry. Sometimes when people faint they cry – the last thing before they faint physically. And you may know what that is to cry to the Lord. But there is some real need, real faith, in this. "Mine eyes are up unto Thee, O God the Lord," said David, when he was at the grave's mouth. Not in the lowest depth, as Jonah, but ready to fall into the grave. O it is a real thing to have an object set before any when in distressing straits or wits' end! And this will draw out faith, a cry for mercy, especially if we get a glimpse of the Lord Jesus, as the great High Priest in heaven, and as having by Himself borne away the sins of His people, and having made a living way into the holy place by His own forerunning into heaven. You see sometimes a way from the belly of hell, where you feel to be, into heaven. O wonderful to have a cry!

And Jonah said his cry entered, came in unto Him, into His holy temple; he knew it. He knew his prayer went in. Answers came down. O but it is solemn to need God, to really need a living God, a living Christ, a real Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, One who can save "from death,

destruction and despair," as Gadsby speaks. We may have sung that hymn: "Immortal honours" sometimes with real feeling in our hearts, and may have forgotten all the blessedness of Christ when in deep trouble; and then to value Him in that trouble, and want to feel again a little of that fulness that is in Him, and of His salvation. It is a mercy to be made needy, to be enabled to pray in trouble, not to be left to despair, to sullenness, to dejection. I believe it is not uncommon for Satan to attempt to overthrow those who are brought low, especially by endeavouring to persuade them that they have no interest in God and His salvation. It is a very common temptation, I believe, but it comes to this: when you are ready to faint, you must either cry or despair; there is no alternative. I believe that no poor sinner will ever find himself with that remembrance of the Lord, and crying to Him, who will not obtain the Lord's ear. He will not let you faint, sinner, not let you despair. He will keep you looking to Him until He does for you what He did for Jonah. And he learnt a great deal through this solemn experience. He puts it into a few words: "Salvation is of the Lord." But you see, we have to know in our experience a little of what salvation means, what we are to be saved from, what we deserve as sinners against a holy God, and our entire inability to contribute the least iota towards our own salvation. To be lost, that is what it means really. And isn't it a great thing to believe and remember, even when we feel really in ourselves that Christ came to seek and save that which is lost! "I remembered the Lord."

Sometimes, when you are in a low place, it may almost seem like a fresh manifestation of truth, as if you never knew it before, that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God in our nature, came down to earth and suffered, bled and died for sinful worms, and to redeem them to God, and did so. And He is in heaven as the great High Priest of His people's profession. "I remembered the Lord." And I believe Jonah's heart went up in that prayer in desire after the Lord; and in hope in his prayer that the Lord would save him, deliver him, deliver him; and He did. You cannot really be in black despair if, though in a low place and helpless, you are enabled to remember the Lord, and consequently send up a cry to Him for help, mercy, and grace.

The same took place in substance with Hezekiah: O, said he, "I am cut off from morning to night," that the Lord had cut him off and he would no more see the Lord; but he cried to Him, turned his face to the wall, and the Lord heard his cry, delivered him, blessed him, gave him to know that He had delivered his soul from the pit of corruption, brought him again, and enabled him to celebrate the Lord's goodness in his salvation. And so the Psalmist: "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" But none can do so but those who experience, and none can experience who know nothing about being in the depths, and about being helpless and resourceless. It is a mercy to have been lost and saved. There is a good deal of natural religion in which there is neither one nor the other – a kind of notional religiousness, more or less doctrinally. But people who are really in the wilderness, being led through it, they know the imperative necessity of crying to the Lord, and being delivered, and the blessedness of that deliverance when it is granted. "I remembered" His finished work, His atoning death. O, that is a point in experience, faith in the bleeding Lamb, faith in His sin-atoning sacrifice, His suffering death. O to remember this with a lively faith, so as to found your hope upon it and cry to the Lord with that plea: "for Christ's sake!" For doubtless Jonah must have felt the guilt of his disobedience, his rebellion. It is not trouble alone, but it is the cease of trouble that makes us faint, and almost strangles when in trouble. But it is in this way the Lord brings His people to confess, acknowledge, and appreciate the atoning sacrifice. And you will cast yourself upon the Lord in prayer, pleading for an interest in that blood which did for sin atone. That is

salvation in the knowledge of it, to know and to feel in your heart that sin is pardoned, and that God for Christ's sake remits it, and that when you cry to God, it is "Christ instead of you is seen." Why, that will prevent you fainting! It will fill you with a lively hope, and in a sense no circumstantial troubles can then desolate you, because all circumstances are under the hand of the Redeemer. "Then I remembered the Lord."

I remembered His immutability. I am often at this in my own soul. There are changes around so continually, and everything is passing away rapidly, and we are passing away, and changes surprise us and sometimes fill us with dismay as to what is next coming. But here is an unchanging, Almighty Saviour, immutable in His love, undiminishable in His grace, unfailing in His compassions, and able to save to the uttermost. And I am sure of this, the Lord's people know something about "uttermost" – their needs, their extremities, and the final extremity which is soon coming to us – all within the compass of Christ's salvations, able to save because He ever liveth, immutably the same, to make intercession, that will pull you up from the lowest depths, supports you under the heaviest woes, hope of coming through every difficulty, if you can cry to God through an immutable Saviour.

And that will bring you to remember Him as the Mediator of the covenant. O that the covenant through which the Lord God deals with His people in and by the Mediator! John saw Revelation 4. One sitting upon the throne, and around the throne there was a rainbow indicative, as I feel, of the covenant and the great truth that all communications between a holy God and sinful worms are made through Christ the Mediator of the covenant. And you will pray to the Lord with a lively hope of answers. The covenant cannot be broken, made eternally with Christ for His people, that covenant that stands, that covenant of which the Lord spoke by Isaiah: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." (Isaiah 54:10)

And you will remember this, remember what the Lord Jesus is as a Mediator of the New Testament, and that by His precious blood, He ratified and sealed that covenant with all its provisions, all its promises, and that will put new life into you. And you will say, "Lord, bless me, bless me according to Thy word; I cast myself upon Thy covenant faithfulness. Do as Thou hast said." And together with this prayer will be the freest and fullest confessions of sin and unworthiness. Sometimes our sins seem so great, numerous, and peculiar, that we can hardly find courage enough to pray. I have found that, so that at times, when the Lord is out of sight, and one forgets who He is, and what He has done, and His faithfulness – covenant love. But when this is brought again into the heart, it puts new life and courage, and you come confessing your sins, and yet believing that the Lord can honourably bless and deliver your soul, and you feel that your prayer does enter, you feel that the Lord hears, that the plea you prefer is accepted. You watch until He answers it fully in your experience by experience, by giving you a fresh enjoyment of that salvation which He has procured by His precious life and death. And then what? Why, you will feel that you have covenant union with Him, that nothing can keep you out of heaven, that no subsequent trouble can undo you; your Mountain will seem to stand strong. O, it is a wonderful assurance of interest in the Lord Jesus, and felt sense of union to Him in the heart, as our friend mentioned in prayer this morning: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." That is different from fainting, isn't it? To be possessed by faith of the Lord's presence, to have a feeling sense of His dying love, and to realise that He is in heaven as your Forerunner there. Paul speaks of that as an anchorage of hope: "Which hope we have as an anchor

of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 6:19,20) Now that will help you to go on, and in one sense you will find yourself as Jonah felt himself, on dry land. "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

He had a standing, was brought up from those depths. And what was his standing, but the Lord Jesus and salvation by Him? And this was his boast, this was his vow: he said: "Salvation is of the Lord. I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed." And it is good when, by rare occasions, a child of God is enabled to give thanks for mercy obtained, deliverance wrought, and especially for salvation made known in the heart and conscience, the love of Christ shed abroad there, forgiveness of sins enjoyed. O this is satisfying! It is remarkable how David in the 142nd Psalm, when he looked for refuge and could find none, and was directed to the Lord, said: "O Lord, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." It was not only that he found a refuge, an escape, but he found in the Lord an all-satisfying portion, and that is very sacred.

I know, and some of you know, it will be a miracle of grace to get just within the gates of heaven, to escape the punishment of our sins in hell. And so it will indeed – a miracle of grace, and only through the infinite virtue and merit of Christ's work, His obedience, and sacrifice, and mediation. But then, people who get this feeling here in their souls have Christ Himself for their portion. O what a portion they have in Him: "A treasure all divine," and says Gadsby, "Matchless grace has made that treasure mine!" O the value of the least hope of this! One can never measure the worth of Christ, but if we possess Him as our Redeemer, our High Priest, our King and Portion, we would be then eternally rich.

And how wonderful it is, how sometimes you may be brought up from the lowest depths in your soul's experience almost to the gates of heaven, by some manifestation and visit of the Lord Jesus in your soul. I would not depreciate the slightest crumb of mercy, or the very least hope of salvation, because I know how invaluable such blessings are, and you can only appreciate the blessings by going into the depths of trouble and conviction. But you are not to be satisfied without a full Christ, without knowing and feeling that He is your salvation, and that from Him all your blessings come. And that will bring you into sacred nearness and acquaintance with Him. So far from being cast out of His sight, you will be brought into His near presence, next door to heaven – heaven begun below, sometimes you will feel by His sweet presence in your heart. If you read Psalms with an enlightened and exercised mind, you may see some of your own experience in them, as in 107th and 119th and other Psalms, how the Psalmist sometimes begins very low, almost it would seem in desperation, and then he rises and he concludes with praises.

And another point has been a great strength, and that is that the Lord will never renounce His own people, nor His own Word, nor His own work. He never will renounce His people, because they are His people. When Samuel was reproofing Israel for idolatry and rebellion, and they asked him to pray to the Lord for them, he allayed their fears and persuaded them to follow the Lord with all their heart, and based his encouragements upon that sacred truth: "The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people." (1 Samuel

12:22) You may find that sometimes a real stay to your mind under the distressing conviction of sin on the one hand, confessing you deserve to be abandoned, but plead the Lord's mercy. If the Lord has given us grace, if we have been subjected to His divine call in regeneration, then nothing can reverse that, and you will find it a stay sometimes when you have nothing good to say of yourself, but to stay upon the immutability of God in Christ.

And then the work He has done, the blessings He has afforded, the promises He has given – these will be a stay to you. Nothing can invalidate them, no circumstances; and I might say advisedly and tremblingly, no sin. No sin can invalidate the Lord's promises, and if you receive that truth out of a solemn experience of helplessness, it won't make you think little of sin, but feel a great deal of the Lord's condescension and faithfulness in His promises, and see that every promise is sealed by atoning blood. "He cannot deny Himself: (though) we believe not, yet He abideth faithful." (2 Timothy 2:13) You will find sometimes, when you remember the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, in the discharge of the suffering part of His mediation as His divine Father's servant, and remember now that He has entered into glory with all power in heaven and in earth. You will find that the faithfulness of the Lord is a real attraction, and you will admire and bless Him for His faithfulness, in spite of all your unfaithfulness.

And then you can put Him in remembrance of His promises, in spite of all your sin, by which you feel to have forfeited any claim upon Him. O that sometimes has preserved me from fainting, that sin has supervened and darkened the mind, and burdened the conscience – but it cannot obliterate the promise. It may from our hearts, and bring great changes to us with respect to our interest; but the Lord knows, and looks upon His people in their depths and hears their cry, and though He hates their sins, He is merciful to them when they cry. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Psalm 50:15) It would be wonderful today if any here who may be feelingly like Jonah was, ready to faint, or like the Psalmist, ready to halt at wits' end, if the Lord heard cries from troubled hearts and granted delivering mercies, so that there might be some real sacrifices of praise.

It is seldom perhaps some of you can praise the Lord. Our lips are sealed with fear, guilt and shame; but there is something can open the lips, and that is a manifestation of a visit from the Lord Jesus, a real sense of His pardoning. Why, it will raise up in your heart a real gladness. When the Lord shines upon you, speaks to you, touches you with virtue, assures you that He still loves you and will never abandon you, because He has made you His and redeemed you, why, you can rejoice, though it be with trembling, rejoice in Him, and what He is, and in your possession of an interest in Him. The one thing you will want then is to be with Him and to be like Him. One of my chief concerns in these my last days is that I feel so unfit for heaven. I hope to get there, because Christ is there, and because I believe He died to take away my sins. I have had assurance more than once of that, but I go down into the depths, and when I look at my unfitness, my deep unfitness, my deep sinfulness, the world of iniquity that is in my nature, and think of the holiness of heaven, it is very solemn. But then, dear friends, there is the robe, the righteousness of Christ, which will cover every afflicted, repenting believer, imputed righteousness, a meetness and title for heaven. O to get there! All who get there will be conscious before they get there of deserving hell, and will be brought to confess that if the Lord never shows them mercy, He will be just on the ground of the law. Ah, mercy shall be built up

for ever; we shall want eternity to bless Him for saving us from hell, felt and feared in our consciences, and for taking us into heaven!

"I remembered the Lord" – remembered that He "has holiness enough to sanctify us all." (181) O to reach heaven, to leave sin behind, and self behind, and yet to enter through the merits of Christ! I have lately longed to be in that condition to be able to say with humble confidence, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." A wonderful mercy if, when we do come to our end, which may not be far distant, we are in that attitude. But if you are down low this morning, and feel this faintness in your spirit, and helplessness, may the Lord help you to remember Him, to send up a cry, a cry to reach His throne, His sanctuary from the very belly of hell. And He can deliver from the lowest hell.

Well, the pilgrim path is very varied; it is a right way by which the Lord leads His people, and even the depths into which they come are according to His wise sufferance, and all to emphasise and prove to them that salvation is of the Lord, and of His divine grace alone. And then presently it will be that one new, ever new song: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood...to Him be glory." (Revelation 1:5,6) The Lord give you courage, dear friends who feel faint, to look up to Him in the heavens. He never, never will forsake any who are brought to depend upon Him, and cast themselves upon the illimitable ocean of the Saviour's merit.

Amen.