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Sermon preached by Mr Croft
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 6 September 1933

Text: Isaiah 41 v 14

"And fear not thou worm Jacob and ye men of Israel.
'I will help thee saith the Lord thy Redeemer the Holy One of
Israel"

What a humiliating name for a patriarch, one of the three of whom God is set forth as being their God. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And the God of Jacob says to Jacob - "Thou worm Jacob". The scripture is never flattering to proud, sinful flesh. Never in the word of God is the human heart extolled. No moral virtues in man are set forth as giving any propriety before God, not one. And so to be brought to believe that this is a right description of either Jacob or ourselves, something must be done to bring us there. There was a time with Jacob when, to have called him that would have brought him up in anger in a moment, being a man of like passions just as we are. And some of us know how quickly does that spirit rise up of indignation if anything is said in a derogatory way of us, or to us. It needs much grace to agree with a humiliating name, and I do hope that God will Himself give us grace to believe and receive this name and not to complain of it. What does it really mean for God to say - "Thou worm Jacob?" Well we know this from observation that there is no creature which is so regarded as nothing, as a worm. It is one of the smallest and most despised creatures there are. Trodden on, regarded as more a pest and a nuisance than a benefit. Looked upon as just nothing. To have a name like this attached to us it must mean to be brought. There is not that in me, I know there is not, that will consent to this apart from the grace of God. To be trodden upon is a very humiliating experience, but God's grace can enable us to endure it. Does not the Lord in the Psalms speak of it? The Psalmist speaking of himself and others, speaking to God, says "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads." That means they were trodden down, just like worms, but

what came to pass. "We went through fire and through water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." It is not what is our present condition, so much as what will the Lord do with us when the trial or the difficulty, painful though it be, is ended. What is God's mind in that trouble that some may be in now? There are some troubles that long continue while others are short and sharp and painful, but humiliating just the same. Well, this is a name which all will consent to and receive in their hearts as God is pleased to open up the condition which we are all in by nature. But see if you really believe; bring it home with power, solemn power, that we have nothing, can do nothing, no more than a worm of the earth. Helplessness is in this name, and that is our own case; utter helplessness. Defencelessness is in this name, and that is just what is our case; we are entirely defenceless, except insofar as God defends us. We can neither help ourselves, nor defend ourselves of our own power, no more than a worm can. How was Jacob brought to it? Trouble, trouble that he could not avoid. Painful, trying things; deceived by Laban time after time; treated with disdain and often with harshness. It brought him down. You see the hand of God in giving him his wages. His was to be the worst of the cattle according to Laban's arrangement. His was to be the best of the cattle according to God's arrangement. Hard work that to watch men change things. They seem to have all the power and yet eventually to see the hand of God in overruling these things and bringing us safely out. Many of the ways of the Lord in this are difficult to follow but the end will prove them all to be right. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob", the lower thou hast to go down, the more thou wilt see My power in bringing thee safely through. And the climax of his humiliation was that day when he heard that his brother Esau was coming. Then his heart began to sink. All will be over now; nothing can prevent the overthrow. And he began to contrive how he could pacify Esau, but even then he must wrestle in prayer with God and confess, as he did confess, that he was not worthy of the least of all His mercies. So he had to come down to that, he was not worthy of the least of God's mercies and who can say which is the least? We are surrounded by many mercies. There are some which we might call less than others, but he and we are not worthy of the least. That is coming down

to the bottom. Now if he could have known what God was about to do, his heart would have been tranquil, but he did not. Just as in our troubles, we have wondered how they would end. We have felt sometimes so tossed about with one thing or another and clouds over our head, a rough road in front, impossible to retread, no turning back; what will be the end or outcome in the midst of it. But start this cry - "Lord help me"; "O Lord look on this trouble. Let it not be small with Thee. Come to my help. I am a poor worm of the earth." It is there we are brought to consent to it. Trodden down and likely to be trodden under and destroyed if Thou do not come to my help.

"Fear not thou worm Jacob I will help thee". It must have been a word to him, a help to him when the angel, with whom he wrestled there, blessed him. The Lord blessed his soul and gave him, though he had been lamed, the victory. Ah, he soon saw the way of God in the matter. The Lord did not tell him that his brother Esau would come in a reconciled frame. He had to wait for that. O what a happy outcome, a wonderful outcome for poor worm Jacob, who was brought down to nothing, to find that God would do what no-one else could do; could turn the heart of his brother and make him his friend. It was because he had a friend in heaven that Esau was made to be his friend on earth, nothing else. If we have no Friend in heaven, how can we expect in these trials, into which we come, any happy outcome from them, but, having one who fills the mercy-seat, who knows our feeble frame, who hears the cry of the poor when he begs for mercy, there is, there has been, there will be again, a happy outcome, a blessed result, God brings forth at the end of the trial. Fears are in the way; fears often that our groundless, but real fears. A groundless fear is a real fear until its groundlessness is made manifest. And there are many things that we are afraid of that will not come to pass, but our fears concerning them are very real and these "fear nots" in this chapter are very necessary. If we belong to that people whom God is teaching His truth we shall know how necessary they are by the various troubles and trials of the way through which we shall come, in which no human hand can help us at all, but the hand of God alone can bring us out and take us safely through to the end and land us safe in

glory.

Worm Jacob fears that he shall at the end prove a hypocrite. The devil will tell him so and there is much to support that. That is one of our chief troubles in these matters, the devil has so much ground to say what failures we have been. How many times we have resolved to try and do better but failed every time. We are continually endeavouring to improve on the past, but we fail, fail continually, and often in such a way as to bring shame, deep guilt into the soul, yet these are the ways which the Lord is pleased to employ to make us know Him, who never failed; of whom we read - "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." All these failures, inward and outward, that we come into are essential to know, that we may value Him and the work of Him who never failed. The Lord Jesus is our hope, and to have Him is to have a sure ground of help. "I will help thee". Did He ever disdain one who came to Him on earth begging for help? Never one. Did any case come to Him who was too far gone in disease to cure? Never one. He had no incurable diseases brought to Him. They were incurable as far as men were concerned, but they were never incurable by Him. He took them at once in hand and dealt at once with the case, and what joy, what relief, what thanksgiving, accrued to Him from those He so healed. O, how they blessed His Holy Name. They were as helpless as Jacob was, but He whose power is Almighty, the helper of the helpless came to their case and cured it. Ah, God does not require long periods to cure His people. He speaks the word and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He is Almighty.

"Fear not thou worm Jacob". Ah, He has these characters here and there. He breaks their proud heart down, bends their iron sinew in their necks; takes away self-confidence, and self-admiration which is so latent in our wicked hearts, and brings us down to this - "We can do nothing." And those that know they can do nothing will prize Him who can do everything. "I know" said Job, "that Thou canst do everything and that there is nothing hid from Thee". All creatures obey Thy command. There is no power that can resist the hand of God; with God all things are

possible. Therefore these poor creatures, helpless worm Jacobs, they will have their case well dealt with that is committed into His hands. He is a good God, a just God. A good God and a Saviour, truly He is.

But He not only shows His poor helpless Jacob what He can do for him, but He speaks to the men of Israel. He brings them all together. The margin of the Bible there reads - "Ye few men" and it seems to say this that these people that God comes to help are naturally as worms, and too there are very few of them. Their littleness, their poverty, and their helplessness on the one hand and their fewness on the other is here set forth. Ye men of Israel. You remember the time when the army of Israel were like a little flock of kids before their enemies, so few were there to put in the field, while arrayed against them was a great army, they were so reduced. So few; so few in this world fear God. Very few are there who cry out of bitterness of soul. There are very few in number compared with the vast number of professors who know nothing of vital religion, who can put on a profession and put it off with the same ease. Many who have only a one day a week religion. At the end of that day they have finished with it for another week, and nothing is seen of them in the house of God for another week and they would not be seen then but for God having given a day and kept it to us in which the work of this land mainly ceases. It is a mercy to have a daily religion, a religion that will bring us to the house of God whenever the opportunity presents itself, whichever way or day that be. Few there are, but what a blessing if we belong to those few. Mr Covell once said this - "If there are only two men in Croydon who are going to heaven I want to be one of those two." He saw so few who knew the things of God and I feel that if there are but a little handful, a very few men, who are on the way to heaven, no matter how few there be, I hope I am one of that few. If I am, it is an honour, a mercy, a favour, because it means this, that in the covenant of grace, in the book of life, my unworthy name was written. It means this, that the Father sent His dear Son to die for me and His willing Son obeyed, and when He cried "It is finished" my debt was cancelled, and blotted out. It means this, that the Holy Ghost convinced me of sin because of the covenant,

and because of the blood of Jesus having paid the debt, because of the eternal council of Jehovah including my poor name. Is not that a wonder? Ah, there are few, I feel there are few, will ever find the way to heaven. Broad is the road that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in thereat. But strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it. We have no promise in scripture that the number of the people of God will be ever very large. For Timothy was addressed in that Epistle - "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived". Worse and worse, not better and better, as some seem to think. This world is not growing any better; it is growing worse. Evil practices spreading into religion, carelessness of life, alliances between the church and the world, a lack of sobriety among the people and this will spread more and more. Few, very few, have the grace of God in their heart and are separated from an ungodly world to walk a way which is frequently very lonely indeed. "The few that I can call my friends" says the hymnwriter "are like myself in fetters bound, and weariness their steps attends". But what a blessed few, these men of Israel, those who have in their begging, and pleading, and crying to God, prevailed with Him, and have had their names changed. They were wrestlers; they are now prevailers through grace. They are on the way to heaven. They receive that mark upon them; shame for His sake. To be identified with a poor people, a despised people, to pay regard to a gospel which in this world is set at nought by the high and the great Ecclesiastics in the land; to be willing to be reckoned nothing if so be we get safe home at last.

Fear not ye few men. A remnant, a residue shall be saved. This sets forth the fewness. A remnant and a residue are but few compared with the great bulk but this few God has taken in hand and He will do great things for them. He says to this poor worm Jacob - "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth". A poor man that can scarcely move, cannot in his own strength, to be made of God a new sharp threshing instrument to thresh the mountains and beat them small and make the hills as chaff and to fan the people with the fan of the preached gospel and fan out hypocrisy and deceit in the churches. A wonderful

thing

He calls the fool and makes him know
The mysteries of His grace
To bring aspiring wisdom low
And all its pride abase

He takes the weak, the poor, the needy, and things that are not; that is they are not of any great consequence in this world, in man's esteem, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. God is the doer of it all. In this same prophecy, further on, the sixtieth chapter, there is this word spoken - "A little one shall become a thousand; a small one a strong nation. I, the Lord will hasten it in His time." and so in the fulness of time, in the gospel day, He took a little band of men of low estate, poor men, fishermen, people of no account, not thought much of by the powers that were in that day. From that little band of poor men He brought forth wonderful things. One of those poor men stood up on the Day of Pentecost and expounded the scripture prophecies, this very prophecy of Isaiah, and showed many things in it, and other parts of the Old Testament and God enforced it, charged on these hearers, the death of His own dear Son in regard to their cruel and wicked way toward Him. They were pricked in their hearts. A little one shall become a thousand, the preached word being effectual to that extent that in one day there were added to the church three thousand souls. A small one, a strong nation. All in the hands of this great Covenant keeping God, who does everything well. I, the Lord, will hasten it in His time, but at the most at any one time in this world the people of God will be few by comparison with the many, and I hope we are content to be just what it pleases the Lord we should be in this present world, to be down-trodden, ignored, set at nought, despised, forsaken, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Was not He willing? Did He not lay aside His glory in taking into union with Himself a nature pure and holy in which He could die? He laid aside the outward display of that glory, and for a time dwelt on this earth and His face was more marred than any mans. He had not where to lay His head; He was hungry; He was weary. But He went through all

that humiliation from men's hands for the sake of His dear people and this He says to His few men. It is enough for the servant to be as his Master; enough for the disciple to be as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of His household, and it is quite sufficient for one who has in his own heart the love of Christ to say - I will, God enabling me, espouse that precious Name. I will serve Him while I may in this world. I hope in His mercy; I trust, by His grace, to one day be in heaven.

Fear not that great, terrible day. Fear not that solemn hour when death shall come on apace. We have many fears, have we not, about that day. Many things we would like to do, but there will be some things we shall leave unfinished, some matter we shall have no hand in when the end comes. Someone else will finish it. Someone else will take the matter up or continue in that sphere. Gaps are made but what does that matter. What does it matter if the main thing with us is that, if at the end of the way we hear the Lord say - "Fear not. When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee. I will take thee safe through the waters of death and land thee safe in heaven." It makes everything on earth very small. "Vanity of vanities" says the preacher "all is vanity", and we know it to be true when death, eternity, the things of God, of heaven are brought home to the soul.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob". There are more riches for poor worm Jacob than the world at its best possesses. If we could call the stars our own; if all this world with its gold and silver belonged to us, we should be poor, if we had no hope. Eternity is at the very door. Many are being called up into it suddenly, without warning, but not so those who fear Him. They are warned, warned of God, as Noah was who "warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." And all those few men, these poor, despised, feeble few, by faith they have prepared an ark, that is they have fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Ark of Grace, to hide. If a worm endeavours to hide it creeps away. So do those who fear God; they creep into their resting place, into the Rock. Even a worm can crawl into a

rock if there is an opening very small. It is a mercy to be enabled here, by the grace and mercy of God, to find refuge in the wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ; to feel that His wounds and death, his burial, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God are all for us; that through Him we shall reach home safely. Fear not the end then, poor worm Jacob. It will be good. The way to it may be hard and rough and sad, but the end, and that is all that really matters, will be good. There is many a battered vessel, storm driven after all the trials of the way, comes into its haven in peace, and when safely anchored in that haven, the storms are but a memory, the troubles are over. "So He bringeth them into their desired haven." Fear not then worm Jacob and ye men of Israel, few though there be, the end will be right. The Lord says it; the Redeemer says it to His redeemed people. Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Are His sufferings to be lost? Is His work to fail? Did He redeem, or only attempt to redeem? The Arminian tells us that He has done His part and it belongs to us now to do ours. It would fail if it depended on that. If our works were required it would fail. But nothing is to be added to the work of the Lord Jesus. He went to the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believeth; every dear child of His. And they shall have, every one of them, the full benefit of His suffering on their behalf. O, it is a full gospel that comes to us through Jesus Christ. He is made of God unto us sanctification, righteousness, redemption. He is our peace; He is our joy; He is the object of our love, if we can say we have not much religion, but we do feel a love to Jesus Christ. We may not attain to much knowledge; we may have bad memories, but we do really love Jesus Christ. Love in the heart to Him must be there because of His love to us, for the love of Christ to His people begets that love in the souls of His people. "If ye love Me" said the Lord "keep my commandments". "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." He who paid that heavy, mighty debt for them, He calls them to Himself. "Keep My commandments". If love be there, if love be real, let it be seen to be real; showing it by acts; showing it in walk; showing it in prayer to Him to do these things for us. "Fear thou not". O what a word it is. The weak and the mean and the poor and the despised on the earth - Fear not thou worm Jacob;

the end will prove who is right and that victory will be thine
which came through Jesus Christ, through His death. May the Lord
bless these few words for His Name's sake.

AMEN.