

1032
2aG692

1032

**LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS**

Sermon preached by Mr.F.L.Gosden at Galeed, Brighton,
on Wednesday Evening 27th December 1961

"Finally, Brethren Farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace;
and the God of love and peace shall be with you." 2 Corinthians 13:11.

While I was considering that this is the last evening service this year, this word came into my mind: 'Finally brethren, farewell.' What is bidding us farewell is this year; but if we are under divine teaching the voice during the year is the voice of God. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors." In looking back on one occasion the Psalmist said, "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto Thee, O God: will I sing." The year that is nearly run out, all that has been said by God to His people in His providence, in His grace, His voice in affliction, His voice in His chastening, are for that period finished. We might well examine ourselves as to what influence and purpose have been all the dealings of the Lord with us.

'Finally,' says this year, 'brethren, farewell.' It passes into the past, never to be gathered up again. It reminds us of that word in Jeremiah, "The harvest is past and the summer is ended, and we are not saved." There will come a 'finally.' It has been with seven that we buried during the year and last year it was thirteen. That is twenty in two years. So that this 'finally' may have a very solemn actual meaning to us, for we know not what a day or hour may bring forth. So Peter says: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be?" Moses even in his song expressed himself, "Oh that My people were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." As the Lord has led us about during the year, have we received any instruction? Has He proved us? His chastenings have been upon us, afflictions abound among us, His knockings have been very solemn. 'Finally brethren, farewell.' Time is very important. Writing to the Ephesians Paul says: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time." Moses in the Psalm takes up the same point: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." 'Finally brethren, farewell.' There is this consideration too - our own part; what we have spoken cannot be unsaid, what we have done cannot be undone - 'finally.'

'Finally brethren, farewell.' So it is the year that is taking leave of us. What the purposes of God will be in another year He only knows. It will be a mercy if we can look back upon the year that is nearly run out and confess, 'Shame and confusion of face belong to us;' and also on the other hand, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." There is another thing, too difficult for me to touch upon because of the weakness of it - but the ministry, the services for the year are nearly ended - 'finally.' Has anything been done? Has there been any profit? It is gone, and we are accountable to God for His mercies. His voice day by day in creation, His voice in providence in all our movements, His voice in the Gospel of His grace and in the ministry of the word - 'finally brethren, farewell; the year is done.' But come to a fruitless fig-tree: "These three years came I seeking fruit and finding none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" It will be very solemn if that is the final judgment. 'Finally brethren, farewell.'

Yet a farewell message not only refers to past, but also to the future. If you bid a friend farewell and are about to leave them, it is a recognition of past friendship and desire for their future welfare. So the Apostle here says, 'Finally brethren, farewell', and then gives some gracious admonitions and exhortations for the future; 'Be perfect.' Paul brings to the notice of the Hebrews this point in the 6th chapter, which opens: "Let us therefore go on unto perfection." As I judge, 'be perfect' means, 'be complete.' And with respect to the ministry, which has great importance, and Paul has this in mind - writing to the Ephesians he says: "For the perfecting of the saints." That is the purpose of the ministry; "the gift of evangelists, and pastors, and teachers is for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." 'Be perfect' - complete. The fulness of the Godhead that was in Christ bodily cannot be communicated to any, but this perfection or completeness which he exhorts to here is all that accompanies salvation, all that is in Christ Jesus to be known which is essential to salvation.

'Be perfect' - complete. Writing to the Colossians he says of them, "Ye are complete in Him." "Let us go on unto perfection." It is a completeness in salvation, nothing lacking. The Lord Jesus has finished the work that His Father gave Him to do, and is become the Author of salvation, and that salvation the Holy Ghost works in the experience. And so Paul says, 'Be perfect' - complete. It is not complete to lay a foundation to a building, but as we read in Zechariah, the completion or perfection of it is for "the top stone to be brought forth, crying, Grace, grace unto it." His people are to be made complete in Christ; but Paul here exhorts them in experience to be complete, to be perfect, in all those things that accompany salvation. And in order to this he says earlier, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." It is a great thing to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. To neglect salvation is a solemn thing, for "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Therefore the whole Word of God is a revelation of the purposes of God in salvation, and the Scriptures are sufficient to "thoroughly furnish a man unto all good works." Everything in order to completeness is revealed in the Gospel. 'Be perfect' - not stop short.

'Finally brethren, farewell; be perfect.' It was the desire of the Apostle "to present every man perfect at the day of Jesus Christ" -complete, and in order to this the Apostle preached the Gospel, the whole counsel of God. There will be the doctrines of grace, experience, and practice. If we only know doctrine, and have no experience, and bring forth no fruit, there is no perfection or completeness. To be complete we need to be taught doctrine, and also to have that doctrine made life in our experience, and where that is so, of necessity there will be a fruitful life and obedience to the Gospel. 'Be perfect-complete.'

'Be of good comfort.' There is a bad comfort. We sing about that sometimes:

*Let no false comfort lift us up
To confidence that's vain; (Gadsby's 28)*

That is not good comfort. And it may not be good comfort when one may seek to comfort another without a good ground for it. The Apostle tells us what good comfort is in comforting one another. He sought to comfort the people "with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God." This is good comfort - "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people saith your God; speak ye comfortably to

Jerusalem and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished; she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." That is good comfort. 'Be perfect, be of good comfort.'

Good comfort may not be by getting out of an uncomfortable position, or out of trouble. If we can take comfort by getting out of trouble the wrong way, we shall, prove, if we are the Lord's, that He will bring a heavier trouble on us. But good comfort in trouble, distress, and affliction is to have the grace of submission to the will of God, and that is a comfort. To be enabled to say, "Thy will be done." Submission in trouble is a great grace. Submission when there is nothing wrong is easy. To say, "Thy will be done", when everything is right, anybody can say; but to have comfort in trial, and perplexity, and disappointment, and pain, we shall have to come into the blessed secret of David - "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul." If you walk that out, there will be teaching in it. A multitude of thoughts. In some periods of your lives there may be teeming thoughts coursing through your mind, distressing weakening thoughts; but in the multitude of thoughts concerning this life, concerning the family, concerning your body, your estate, your future, your past, your end - a multitude of thoughts, Thy comforts strengthen my soul. And the great comfort in the midst of the multitude of our thoughts is His thought. The Lord says, "My thoughts are not yours," and that is a comfort.

'Be perfect, be of good comfort.' There is ground for it. There is not much comfort in this world. Restlessness, chaos, confusion fills the world to-day, and therefore the comfort and consolation of faith is in those things that are eternal and unseen, and yet real. And when the blessed Spirit brings them into your heart, they will be much more real than the tangible things that you can handle and see. 'Good comfort.' The real ground for comfort is the presence of the Lord, because you will have the comfort of all that He has if. He is with you the hope of glory. You will, have the comfort of His love. What comfort is there like true love, even naturally? But love divine: You will have the comfort to believe that His infinite wisdom is guiding you, and that He is too wise to err, whatever He is doing with you.

*In every state secure,
Kept by Jehovah's eye. (Gadsby's 412)*

Oh God is a comfort, God in Christ. His divine perfections that meet there are a comfort to a poor, otherwise distracted tempest-tossed pilgrim. Good comfort in God. Sometimes you will feel it is the only comfort you have, and He is the comfort of every other comfort. Even His comforts in providence, His blessings, the comforts of a home, and all the blessings of this life, where there is faith, it is Christ in the midst of them that constitute them a different kind of comfort from those that are without Christ. Oh what a comfort it is to receive even our daily blessings as coming from the hand of a Father! Not only does He prepare the cup, a cup of chastening it may be, a cup of sorrow, but there will be that 'something secret that will sweeten all.' It is good comfort that comes from God.

This will be good comfort too, as your faith believes by the Holy Spirit in the infinite Being of God, a comfort that He is omniscient. Those divine perfections which are incomprehensible as to their nature, yet the comfort of incomprehensible things is very real. We cannot comprehend omniscience, cannot begin to, and would not attempt to; but the very fact that it is the

incomprehensible omniscience of an infinite God is a comfort to a poor sinner. It was to the hymn-writer:

*He sees us when we see not Him,
And always hears our cry. (Gadsby's 308)*

A beautiful chapter, as you know, is the 139th Psalm, the whole of the Psalm taken up with that divine perfection of God. 'Be of good comfort.'

This is a beautiful farewell word, solemn in looking back. And yet we feel to be guilty in looking back at the year - and who does not? I feel solemnly with respect to my poor preaching, God knows, and some of you may with regard to your hearing. But I would not comfort you in that, nor myself. But the comfort is in this, that there is mercy and forgiveness with Him. Is not that a comfort to a sinner? And this comfort divine enters into places that are calculated to produce anything but comfort, as David in the depths. "Out -of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord: If Thou shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?" What comfort did he find there? "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." And how did that comfort or strengthen him? "I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope." Ah it is good comfort that is based upon the Word of God: We have mentioned it lately because we felt it. I don't think in all my experience I have felt the power of the authority of the Word of God in pleading with Him, as of late. My friends, you may be in such a state, may have in your life a secret known to you, some besetment, some sin, which has brought upon you that which you will have to carry to your grave, that which almost stops your mouth in prayer; yet while it would completely stop your mouth in prayer if you had not the Word of God to plead, I don't know of a condition that a sinner brings himself into that the Word of God does not reach. If in anything you pray and plead this - 'according to `Thy Word,' what an authority, what a comfort it is! There are some things I could never come to the Lord with, if it was not for His Word. Perhaps the 36th of Ezekiel covers up some of the worst of cases. 'Good comfort.'

You look at the comfort that David had when he expressed himself thus: "My sins are like a heavy burden are too heavy for me. They are gone over my head. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness; my loins are filled with a loathsome disease." He did not leave it there. "Lord, all my desire is before Thee." He knew that the Lord saw something else besides stinking wounds and loathsome disease. He saw that desire that the Spirit had wrought in his heart. Therefore you take comfort from the Word, for it is written for our instruction, "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

'Finally brethren, farewell.' What the Word of God has had to say to you in the year will soon be complete. If you have never profited, never walked in the Scriptures and in the truth in obedience, it is past - 'finally farewell.' But at the same time there is the future 'Be perfect.' If you feel so incomplete, is there a Scripture that you can plead before the Lord? You cannot go and say 'Lord, I have been unfruitful this year, am ashamed of my bare branches and have brought forth little fruit, and therefore bless me.' You could not do it. But you can go unto the Lord and confess your unprofitableness and plead His gracious Word, "From Me is thy fruit found." He saw Ephraim bemoaning himself thus. He sees His people, and it is a mercy in looking back, if we have a true spirit of repentance. The Lord hears our groanings, sees us covered with shame, sitting in ashes and clothed with sackcloth, and His Word speaks to such. You take it to Him. "He raiseth the poor out of

the dust." 'Lord raise me from the dust according to Thy Word.' "He lifteth the beggar from the dunghill: 'Lord, I feel a dunghill in my nature, lift me according to Thy Word.' 'Good comfort.' "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit and miry clay, and set my feet upon the rock." 'Lord, lift me up and set me upon the rock, according to Thy Word.' 'Good comfort,.' and so you can go on to the future.

'Be of one mind.' That is of one mind in the Gospel, and in order to this we shall need to be taught of the same Spirit. "There is one body, one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling, one Lord." 'Live in peace.' We can never be if we are not of one mind. If we are not in agreement in the main things, we shall never be in peace in them. There may not be equality. The Apostle shows the strength of that oneness of mind; not all equal, not all having the same gifts, but the self-same Spirit in divine teaching.

'And live in peace.' He tells the Hebrews how to do it. "Consider one another, and provoke one another unto love and good works." Really you have the pith of the matter there. Live in peace, consider one another. It would help us, to consider that all are not equal. You might consider the different temperaments and dispositions. Not talk about one another, but consider. Consider the weakness of some, and ye that are strong should bear the burdens of the weak. Consider one another. Consider the circumstances, afflictions, the influences that may be brought to bear upon another. Consider one another, and provoke one another to love. It is a beautiful expression - "provoke." Usually it is used in order to provoke to anger, so that you do everything you possibly can to upset somebody. But this is the opposite - provoke unto love. Go out of your way and do everything you can to provoke love, peace, and harmony.

'Finally brethren, farewell.' When you look back upon these points as to how it has been in this year, it is as though the apostle would say, 'The Lord can correct what is wrong.' Well, and this is the promise, 'The God of love and peace shall be with you.' As much as to say, this is the source from which it must all come. The perfection must come from Him. Comfort can come alone from that glorious spring, the comfort of God in Christ by the Holy Ghost, who is the Comforter. "I will send you another Comforter, and He shall abide with you for ever." 'And the God of love and peace.' Two blessed divine characters of God, or rather attributes. 'The God of love and peace shall be with you.'

It is a feeble word, but I would press it upon myself and you, in both looking back and forward. If we feel that the word covers us with shame and confusion, may we fall before the Lord as His voice in the year that is passing says, 'Farewell,' and look forward to the new year. May He give us grace to walk in this exhortation; 'Be perfect, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. '

Amen.