

1081
LaG692

1081 LaG692

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Sunday morning, 13th June 1965

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Isaiah 41:10

In the 65th chapter of Isaiah it says, "The new wine is found in the cluster," and this text is one of the clusters. O what a cluster of exceeding great and precious promises! Boaz said to the reapers for the benefit of Ruth: "Let some handfuls of purpose fall." And the text is one of those handfuls of purpose. But it is solemn to handle the Word of God deceitfully. These promises and the blessings of the Gospel are not scattered about promiscuously to all and sundry.

The first man that feared, and the first fear recorded in the Word of God, is that of Adam: "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:9,10) That is the first fear that man ever experienced. It came through sin; there was no fear in Eden. O the perfection of the works of God and that head of creation, man, created in the image of God! He knew nothing of fear before he fell, but he heard the voice of God after he fell, and fled from His presence. He knew he was naked; he was naked before, but he knew it not. O the beautiful purity and holiness of God's creation! But what a flood of iniquity entered into Adam, defiled his whole being. It is a true word that we sing:

The dire contagion fills the veins,
And spreads its poison to the heart. (Gadsby's 977)

And those that are convinced of sin know it, know it in their own person. Some of you feel it, that the dire contagion has filled your veins and spread the poison to your heart. You are poisoned, and you fear. Fear entered into man. Fear entered into the world – superstitions, jealousies, enmities, curse, confusion, chaos, strikes – what a state of fear the whole world is in! But O what a voice is in the Gospel!

Adam was the first sinner; he was the first saint. He was called by grace; the Lord did not let him go. "Adam, where art thou?" Adam, where is that image, that sacred image in which thou wast created, the beauty of thy sinless humanity? Adam, look at thy deformity, thy blackness, thy ruin, thy death, where art thou? He feared. He was afraid. And that really is the root of all fear. But the Lord made a provision. He made a covering for them from the skin of beasts, and therefore, it was a type of the righteousness of Christ; a type of His sin-atonement sacrifice. The Gospel is preached in the 3rd chapter of Genesis – O what a mercy! "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Otherwise this text could never have been written. Look at it. As we have just hinted, there is everything since the fall to fear, everything to fear, within and without. All men are full of fear and consternation, nations are full of fear, full of confusion. O the blessed Gospel!

"Fear thou not." Then some who are tender will say: "They are precious promises, but have I any right to them?" Well, they would be meaningless if there were none that feared; and they would be to no purpose unless there were those characters that are dismayed, and those that are weak, and

those that are helpless. The thing is, have we been brought into those conditions by the Spirit? Do we fear, and are we dismayed, and are we brought into weakness? Can you say:

No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well? (Gadsby's 739)

That is something if we are brought there, but it is negative. Negatives, where it can be seen as the work of the Spirit, are not to be despised, but you cannot live upon negatives. I believe there are many gracious people who are at that stage of experience. Some of you may feel that all your religion seems negatives, and do not seem to possess anything. But a religion is full of necessity, wants, a sense of destitution; you feel weak, and dark. I feel your deadness. They are negatives. But there is a part of the Holy Ghost's work which produces these, what I should call 'gracious negatives.' But if they are the work of the Spirit you will never rest content with negatives, and my advice would be – for I have been compelled to do it myself – to take those negatives to the Lord, and ask Him to transform them into positives. And He can; and this is how He does it: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee."

Let us look at a few fears – in general, fears that people have. As we said, the earth is full of fears, wicked men are full of fear. But the fears of the Lord's people are peculiar; they are peculiar people, have peculiar fears, have peculiar hopes and peculiar joys and peculiar sorrows. And I feel that it is safe and true to commence with Adam's fear. We shall know it if we are convinced of sin. Conviction of sin in Adam's conscience was exceedingly deep. Had it not been for grace, he would have hidden himself from the Lord entirely. O but if you fear under a sense of your sinnership, so that you see yourself as nothing, nothing but sin throughout the whole of your being, felt that you were beyond the reach of mercy – I believe in my little way I know what I am talking about – you may have felt that you are too wicked to pray. If you have felt that, you have known a little of what Adam experienced – too wicked to appear before God, too naked. But the Lord did not allow Adam to hide himself. O what a sweet hope that must have been, when the Lord brought unto Adam and Eve that covering of the skin of beasts! What a mercy it was that He did not consign them away! He did Cain, to his destruction. So that in this greatest fear – I might say the fear that contains all fears – there is a voice in the Gospel: "Fear thou not." This could not be but for this mighty "I." "Fear thou not, for I am with thee." O for faith to behold, by the Spirit, the Redeemer, the Mediator between a just and holy God and self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners!

"Fear thou not" can only be spoken from the mercy seat, from between the cherubims, the throne of grace. O what a voice this is: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." (Luke 15:2) Come: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) And this labour and this burden is that of sin, under conviction, by the holy solemn action of the law in the conscience. This alone will make the Gospel attractive, make grace precious. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee."

Well, that is the commencement of spiritual fear, exercise and conflict of soul. But these fears will more or less follow a child of God through their pilgrimage. You take for instance, Asaph in the 77th Psalm; look at his fears: "Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (v.8,9) "Fear thou not, for I" – I, who delighteth in mercy, whose mercy endureth for ever; I, the high and holy One that

inhabiteh eternity, and yet looketh upon him that is of a contrite and humble spirit; I, who am the light of the world, to whom the darkness and the light are the same. O this is the voice of Christ in the Gospel! "Fear thou not, for I am with thee."

There are those too, who all their lifetime were subject to bondage because of the fear of death. Well, death is a very solemn thing. I could not speak lightly of it. Some can speak very glibly of death, and say they are not afraid to die. It is a very blessed thing if, under the light of God's countenance and His presence in your heart, you can say: "I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." But it is very solemn to trifle with death; and many of the Lord's choicest saints have been in bondage a good deal of their lifetime through fear of deaths. And can this promise be made good in such a fear? Yes: "I am with thee." You take the experience of David: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." 9Psalm 23:4) We shall find all comfort and consolation and strength in Christ, whatever we pass through. But O what a mercy to hear His voice and to know it! "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11:25,26)

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee." Some of His people fear when they are brought into darkness, and the Lord hides His face. They fear that their beginning was all wrong; and we should not lightly dismiss these fears, indeed we cannot. Have you ever had that fear, lest after all, your beginning was a mere imagination, and that your religion is just traditional as you were brought up? Fear that there is some secret in religion of which you are destitute? Can this "Fear not" enter into such a case? I believe that is one purpose of the preaching of the Gospel, for when the apostles went down to Antioch, it was, among other things, for this purpose, to confirm the souls of the disciples, and to exhort them to continue in the faith; for it is through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom. And if this fear concerning the beginning is sanctified, O what fresh energy it will put into faith!

Show me some token, Lord, for good,
Some token of thy special love;
Show me that I am born of God,
And that my treasure is above. (Gadsby's 736)

So the Lord exercises faith in the midst of these fears, brings you to pray:

Shine upon Thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun. (Gadsby's 283)

Then there are many fears with respect to the pathway of life in providence. Not so much now as years ago relative to poverty; those fears to a great extent have been relieved. But the Lord's people are in a particular way dependent upon the Lord. They have the fear of God, which is a different thing, although the fear of God is exercised in these fears. They cannot act as though they are their own. Men ride over their head often, as we have it in the 66th Psalm: "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water." (v.12) And not only so, the Lord's people are often called upon to lose their life for Christ's sake; and it may entail a path of adversity, where they might have many fears as to how the matter will fall. A man in business may have some unscrupulous competitors who rise up and threaten his business. Well, a man cannot simply bow

himself and say, "Well, I shall get over that!" He would say to himself, "Now, I wonder what the Lord's purpose is?" It may look as though his business will be ruined. Well, could this "Fear thou not" enter into business matters? I believe it entered into mine many years ago. When looking at the future it seemed as though there was nothing before me but ruin. I could take you to the spot now, where the Lord dropped that word into my heart:

With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer. (Gadsby's 132)

A fullness resides in Jesus our Head – (Gadsby's 184)

– He is the Creator; He has the fullness of creation as well as the fullness of grace. "Fear thou not, for I" – see who the "I" is – Lord of lords, King of kings – see, My divine sovereignty is absolute, and therefore My purposes and designs can never be frustrated. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God."

Dismay is something greater than fear. You may fear many things that do not come, but O when you see disaster, when you see calamities coming! When Hezekiah got that letter from Sennacherib, he was not hard-hearted; he saw that the thing was coming; he took the letter up to the house of God, and spread it before the Lord. He was full of fear, but in the midst of that fear was the exercise of faith; and faith eventually will always get the victory. "Be not dismayed." Paul says: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8,9) Why not? Because the true light had shined. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, had shone into his heart, and he saw everything in that light, and it was God's light.

"Be not dismayed" when the thing that you fear comes to pass. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts." (Psalm 42:7) But, said faith in David's heart: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" He was disquieted, he was dismayed – but – "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him." (v.11) The thing that Jeremiah feared came to pass when he was shut up in the court of the prison, and the Chaldeans were about to destroy the city. He trembled, he said to the Lord: "Behold the mounts." There was the artillery of the Chaldeans about to open fire. "Fear thou not." The Lord said to Jeremiah: "Behold" – not the Chaldeans, not the mounts – "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27) A blessed challenge; a challenge for the comfort of His troubled people: "Is there anything?" Try Me, try it, test Me, bring Me what you will, all that dismays you and causes you to fear, see if anything is too hard for Me, see if there is any enemy that I cannot subdue, any locked door that I cannot open, or coming to the fall, any sin that is too great for my sin-atoning blood.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God." O that would do it! What would some of you seeking, longing souls say, if the Lord was to say that in your heart: "I am thy God?" Well, I feel persuaded of this: I should have no fear or dismay. You would feel more like David in the 27th Psalm: "I will not fear what man shall do unto me." O it is a blessed Psalm and it comes right to the point: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" And this is an experience, and you can see the reason

why David should not fear: "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Now why could he say it? Because of the commencement of the Psalm: "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God." We know not what conditions we shall yet come into, either in spiritual conflicts or with respect to our body. When we come down to the swellings of Jordan, when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, it will indeed be the only consolation, to find in that dark valley this great God to be with us. O that the Lord would speak this to His dear people that are brought exceedingly low, and eternity almost immediately before them! Death is the last enemy that is to be destroyed. Blessed be God, it is a destroyed enemy. Christ destroyed it when He died; the death of Christ was the death of deaths. And if the Holy Ghost should bring that truth, in the comfort of it, to our dear afflicted friends, then they could look at death and not be dismayed.

"For I am thy God: I will strengthen thee." Therefore, this is spoken to weak people. The Lord does not strengthen the strong, He does not comfort those that rejoice, but He strengthens the weak. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." (Isaiah 35:3,4) O the voice of the Lord Jesus in the Scriptures and in the Gospel is a blessed voice! He speaks to cases; He speaks to His peoples hearts; and when He speaks, He speaks the thing He says into the heart. And that is how you will know whether it is the Lord speaking; it will do to you what He says. A minister cannot do that, but the Lord through the ministry can, and does.

"I will strengthen thee." Well, has the Lord weakened your strength in the way? A natural man thinks he is independent of God, he lives as though he is independent of Him; he says, as Pharaoh said: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" (Exodus 5:2) However strong a man is naturally, if he is under divine teaching he will be brought down to a weakness spiritually, and this is spiritual weakness. It is very painful to be weak in soul. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." (Jeremiah 10:23,24) Have you been brought to spiritual weakness? It is the very opposite to a general religion. Bodily exercise in religion is never weak, it is not dependent upon God, it looks better than vital godliness on the surface of it. The poor publican that went up to the temple was very weak, he was full of fears, he was much dismayed at a sight of himself. The Pharisee was not weak at all, he thought the publican looked a poor miserable beggar. He was a beggar! Has the Lord brought you to weakness in yourself?

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come" – come with vengeance, even with a recompense, vengeance upon your enemies, recompense, blessings for your consolation, strength and comfort. "I will strengthen thee" – strengthen thee to continue, because these weak people are ready to halt, "they fall down and there is none to help." He strengthens His people according to that promise in the 20th Psalm: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." And that is a very precious way of being strengthened – and

sometimes you may have known it sitting in the sanctuary, that the Lord has sent help from heaven, and at the same time strengthened you out of Zion through the preaching of the Gospel. You have had, as it were, a double confirmation. Communications from heaven to your soul under a sense of the sufficiency of the grace, the sweetness of the mercy, the immutable love of God to your soul, also to be strengthened through the preaching of the Gospel; and it is a blessed kind of strength, it is indeed! A natural religious strength may appear to be better, but Solomon says in the Ecclesiastes: "To him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion." (ch.9:4) And there are many dead lions in religion, but O to be a living dog! Like that poor woman with an afflicted daughter, she had no strength, she had no help, but her faith brought her to this blessed God. He communicated strength in a very peculiar way. He made her feel more and more her weakness. He answered her not a word, and we can almost realise how her heart failed and sank. When He did speak, it was almost worse than His silence: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." O but she had living faith! It struggled, struggled even against those rebuffs of the Lord's: "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Even the disciples, they rebuked her, but the Lord said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She recognised herself then. He took her in, lost. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me." (Matthew 15:22-28)

"I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee." This upholding refers more, as I view it, to the journey, the race that is set before us. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isaiah 40:29) This is the way He upholds His people:

He lends an unseen hand,
And gives a secret prop
Which keeps them waiting stand,
Till He completes their hope! (Gadsby's 749)

O how long ago some of us would have given up except for this upholding, that mighty omnipotent hand of God! I should. I have many fears now. There is another fear we might have mentioned – many fears now – as to whether I shall hold out to the end:

But much I fear, lest in some hour
Of sore temptation I may fall;
And, yielding to the tempters power,
Faithless might prove, and give up all. (Gadsby's 1043)

It is a real fear, but there is a promise: "The righteous shall hold on his way." "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." (Isaiah 3:10)

"Yea, I will uphold thee. And people that need upholding pray for it: "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." (Psalm 119:117) He upholds the faith that He gives; He communicates fresh strength, gives a fresh sense of interest in Christ, gives some hint, some earnest of the reward, of the inheritance. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." (Hebrews 12:1) That is how we are to do it, looking unto Jesus.

"I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." This is a great thing, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Except for this, my friends, we are completely undone. How could we be but full

of fear and dismay and weakness and helplessness without the righteousness of Christ? And therefore, in all His heavenly consolations, in all the sufficiency of His grace, in all the communications of His Spirit, there is manifested the right hand of His righteousness; and the right hand of righteousness is the Lord Jesus Himself.

O may the Lord make these promises over unto His fearing, weak, trembling people! And yet, they are they who shall endure unto the end, ever sinking, yet they swim. As you look at them, as they are running the course, as they are wandering through the wilderness, why, you wonder that any of them ever get safely to heaven. But "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." (Psalm 84:7) As upheld, they go from strength to strength, they go from faith to faith, from glory to glory.

Amen.

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS