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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening, July, 18th.

"Uphold me according unto Thy wordy that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope." Psalm 119:116.

This is the prayer of faith. The prayer of a man who feels unsafe, for he continues in the next verse, "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." I don't know whether there are any here who have no need for this prayer. Those who have got beyond the need to be upheld by the Lord. One would think that if there was the life of God and a living faith in the soul, that that faith would maintain the soul under all conditions. Well, I would say this, say it carefully, it is not your faith that holds you up; it is the God in whom faith trusts.

You remember that the Lord said to the woman that was a sinner, when she went to the Pharisee's house, and washed His feet with her tears, the Lord said at the end, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." What He meant was this, it was not the grace of faith that made her whole, but He in whom faith trusted; in whom faith hoped, to whom faith appealed; and, therefore, if we have faith it will be tried, and we shall be brought into circumstances where we feel that we are unsafe; cannot keep alive our own souls, our strength faileth. We shall know the pathway of the 107th Psalm: "Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them," and also, "They fell down and there was none to help." Those things in the Word of God express an experience and we do well to examine ourselves and our profession and religion to see whether we are brought into these particular places for the trial of faith, to prove it. It is one way to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and a great mercy to have that exercise and diligence to observe these things in our own cases.

If we have a religion that we can manage and if we have a faith that we can act when we like, then that faith and our religion is bodily exercise; it has its seat in our natural faculties. How much of that kind of religion there is about God only knows, but if we are taught by the Spirit we shall be taught the truth experimentally. We shall know what it is to be brought down to the grave before we are raised up. We shall know what it is for our strength to be turned into weakness. We shall know what it is to sink in the mire where there is no standing. If these things have no place in our experience there is something wrong. Yet we cannot live upon these negative things, but they do make way and preparation for positives - for the blessed positive Gospel.

'Uphold me according unto Thy word.' Pharisees would not think much of this. The Pharisee in the Temple reproached the publican - that sinner; he was thankful he was not like him. O with what disdain he looked upon that poor sinner smiting upon his breast - and all the religion he had got was, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" How much better religion the Pharisee thought he had; what a lot more he had to say!

'Uphold me according unto Thy word.' Lord, Thou hast weakened my strength in the way, I feel ready to halt, ready to faint. Heman got so low he appealed unto the Lord: "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise Thee? shall Thy wonders be shown in the dark and in the

land of forgetfulness?" He felt his death, he felt to be in darkness, he felt to be in the grave, and he felt with David that in his loins was a loathsome disease. Well, these things will bring out a cry, 'Uphold me according unto Thy word' and that is a standing ground, the Word of God. O it is a safe place, a Rock.

*How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith, in His excellent word. (Gadsby's 329)*

So that we have examples from Genesis to Revelation and it is 'according to Thy Word.' That is, as Thou hast upheld those who have gone before uphold me with the same power, with the same grace, with the same mercy. We have said that it is the most powerful argument that we can bring to the throne of grace. It would appear to be a very strong appeal if we should say, 'Uphold me according to my sinkings, uphold me according to my weakness and my prostration'; but here is something greater, 'According to Thy Word.' Earlier in the Psalm we read this; "Let Thy mercies come unto me, O Lord, according to Thy Word, even Thy salvation." It gets right underneath, and if you come and seek for mercy and pardon according to the Word of God, it is a greater plea than if you ask Him to pardon your sins because they are uttermost sins. If He pardons your sin according to His Word, He pardons them according to the revelation of His work, His precious blood, according to the declaration of His Priesthood, according to that word — "He is able therefore, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through Him."

Have you not had to take your case, your sins to the throne of grace, and you seem as though you want something to get right down underneath your uttermost case? Well, this will do it,—'according to Thy Word.' You might say, according to the multitude of mine iniquities, which is right, O but when you come to consider that the whole Word of God and the blessed Gospel is laid right beneath a sinner; Paul speaks of it with respect to the love of God, that we might know the height and depth and length and breadth, to know the love of God. Its height is in heaven; its depth is in the uttermost sins of His people, when He descended to the uttermost parts of the earth, when He was made sin, O the depths of love! And when you bring your case and ask Him to deal with you according to His Word, that gets right down lower, right underneath your case, underneath your sins; then you feel the everlasting arms of love and mercy and grace upholds you.

'Uphold me, according to Thy Word.' You see how Abraham needed it. The Lord called Abraham alone, and He called him to go out from his kindred and people, to be a wanderer in the wilderness. But He upheld him with a gracious promise: "Fear not Abraham, for I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." O how that did uphold Abraham when he started out! And you will need the same; you will bring the word of God and ask Him to uphold you as He upheld Abraham.

Take again Jacob, when he fled; he was a deceiver, he had sinned against his old father and against his brother; he fled, but the Lord followed him. He brought him to Bethel and there He called him by grace and doubtless if the Lord had not sustained him there with that gracious promise, Jacob would have been in despair and ready to perish; but he was upheld with that promise, "I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest; I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And that upheld him.

Joseph - the word of the Lord tried him in the prison. Doubtless it did and it is well to see how the saints of old were tried. They were not stoics, pieces of marble, they felt their distresses. Joseph knew he was in a prison; but He sent His word and healed him. So with John the Baptist; O how he needed his faith to be upheld. That was most mysterious. The testimony of the Lord concerning John the Baptist was a wonderful testimony, yet the Lord allowed him to be put into prison never to come out again; but the Lord sent him a message: "Tell John again, these things which ye do see and hear." And if you are ready to give up, if unbelief seems to predominate in your poor soul and ready to take the ground beneath your feet, then you pray, 'Uphold me according to Thy word unto John the Baptist.' The Lord for substance said to John the Baptist, 'I am the same, yesterday, today and for ever; blessed is he that is not offended in me.' Ah my friends, if we have no faith, no grace in our hearts, we should soon become offended with the Lord! Pliable was, he got into the Slough of Despond at the beginning, but he could manage for himself. He did not faint, he struggled and got out the side of the City of Destruction; but poor Christian struggled in the slough, he needed to be upheld and supported. The fear of God in his heart moved him to that side of the slough that was nearer the Celestial City. Evangelist helped him out and you will need to be upheld according to the word of God. You will need your faith upheld in the fire. If the Lord tries our faith it will be a real trial. "The fire will try every man's work of what sort it is" and in the midst of it you will wonder whether the whole will be consumed, whether after all your religion is nothing but wood, hay and stubble; but not a grain of gold, not a grain of faith will be consumed. 'Uphold me according to Thy word.' Uphold me in a profession of Thy name according to that word, "Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering." and grant me grace to hold fast, and the only way that we can hold fast is for the Lord to hold us up; to keep us near to Himself; to keep us trusting in Him and in His word. You may depend upon it, when we get into these extremities the word of God is made more to us than when everything is smooth, when we have no exercise. Some of you may have proved that. But when the Lord touches you, touches our bodies and gives us to know that we are but men, creatures of a day, we shall need Him to uphold us in body and soul. To uphold us in the pathway of duty that He has appointed for us.

'Uphold me according to Thy word.' Look at the New Testament; look at those who needed the Lord to uphold them. That short prayer of that afflicted woman has been the prayer at one time or another of everyone of His people without exception. If you have been long in a profession of religion and have never prayed that prayer, "Lord help me", then there is something lacking, something wrong. O how dependent we are and shall be all the way through the wilderness journey. "Lord help me." 'Uphold me according to thy word.' There came a leper unto Him, kneeling and beseeching Him saying, "If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." Some of you may feel to be overwhelmed and burdened with sin and guilt. O sin is a dreadful reality, and so is death because of sin! Have you never felt to be upheld under a terrible sense of what you are as a sinner? 'Uphold me according to Thy word.' What you need is that most precious word in the 44th Isaiah: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy sins." O to have that word spoken in a poor troubled sinner's heart! It would indeed enable such to go on their way rejoicing; it would establish their goings, but it is painful to stagger like a drunken man, to stagger to and fro like a drunken man and to be brought to our wits end. But this is where the Lord delights to bring His people in order to teach them who He is, to demonstrate to them that He is the Mighty God, that the government is upon His shoulder; that He has a key which can open and no man shut, shut and no man can open. But we shall be brought against locked doors and He will bring us there and then declare, 'Is there anything too hard for Me?'

That I cannot answer? Any enemy that I cannot subdue? Any sin that I cannot forgive?' and so you plead His word: 'Uphold me, according unto Thy word that I may live.'

There is a fear of death, spiritual death, a fear of death in the soul, fear lest you have a dead religion, lest you have a name and a reputation to live while you are dead before God. It is a very solemn feeling, and the Lord will sometimes lead His people in such a way as to lead them with just their death - inability to pray. You may feel unable to hear when you come to a service, unable to read the Word of God; there seems death stamped upon all, and you may be tempted to the conclusion that you are just a reprobate. You will need to be upheld then, 'according to Thy word that I may live.' I believe it is the desire of my soul. You consider how solemn, if we are really dead and have never been quickened into life. It is possible to have a knowledge of the truth in our head and judgement, but to be destitute of its life and power in our souls. To live and die like that is a dreadful thing, and it will bring you to cry with vehemency- 'that I may live. -Let my soul live;' and look what you need, 'according to Thy word that I may live' by a fresh exercise of the power of Christ's resurrection in my heart.

'That I may live according to Thy word,'- Thy word concerning the dry bones. You may be brought to a state, to look at yourself and your religion and your profession and if the question was asked, "Can these dry bones live?" you would have to refer the question back to God and say, "O Lord, Thou knowest." You come to a point when you feel that you will never really pray again, that you will never know that sweet communion and close walk with God; and you will need to be upheld, 'That I may live.' Life is very sweet, spiritual life. To feel the breathing of, the Holy Spirit in your heart Godward, that you may live and that the word of God might dwell in your heart richly in all wisdom. The Lord Jesus has the words of eternal life. These are the words of eternal life, but not in the mere print and paper, the letter; you will desire to live in the Word of God so that there is a mutual attraction between what you read and what you need in your soul. It is very blessed to read the Word of God under the influence of the Spirit and a living faith. You may have felt that there are some verses, some texts which stand out, stand out as though they were in a deeper print. Some of the hymns may have been impressed upon your heart when you are in lively exercise of soul; but O, when the Lord withdraws you look at those same Scriptures, look at those same hymns and you wonder whatever you saw in them, and you fear! O it is blessed to live spiritually before God!

'Uphold me according unto Thy word that I may live.' Live in the Gospel and that the Gospel might live in me. You know the difference. Know what it is to sit under the sound of the Gospel, when your heart is lively by the Spirit and the Gospel comes to you in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. O to feel the life of God in your soul, under the preaching of the Gospel; and we believe in our little measure, very little measure, we have known moments in the pulpit when our soul has lived in trying to preach the Gospel. But it is very painful when you hear like a dead person but the thing is that a living person knows; it senses death, not that the life of God can ever die out, but the Lord does hide His face; He does suspend the operations and communications of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, David prays, "Cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." O sweet restoration when you once more live, when your hearings are restored, when the Holy Ghost in the preaching is restored; when you are restored to fresh communion with the Lord, when your heart is afresh broken and made contrite and tender, when the fear of God lives again in your conscience., and faith is increased and your hope

strengthened. 'Uphold me according to Thy word that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope.' This is a tender fear. It is a fear lest you should bring reproach upon the name of God. You think of it those of you who have made a profession because of your love to the Lord Jesus; if you should be left to turn away and to walk no more with Him and to be ashamed of the things that you have hoped and the hope that you have had in the things of God! A very solemn consideration.

'Let me not be ashamed of my hope.' A very solemn thing for a minister if he dies spiritually, and the ministry completely dries up so that he has to give everything up, that he becomes ashamed of ever professing to be a minister of Christ. 'Let my soul live. Let me not be ashamed of my hope.' Of course there may be some here who think that that is a very poor attainment in the spiritual life. Well, if it is different with some of you, make the most of it. If your soul is like a watered garden be thankful for it. If you feel the sweet influence of the Holy Ghost wafting you to the windows of His grace,

*Spread your sails and catch the breezes,  
Sent to waft you through the deep. (Gadsby's 1102)*

If you are enjoying communion with the Lord, I would be sorry to disturb it. The Church in Solomon's Song said, "I found Him Whom my soul loveth, I held Him and would not let Him go." Do the same, those of you who are in His embrace, enjoying the light of His countenance, and the sweet unction of His love; hold Him fast, but I can tell you this, for it is so, there will come a time when all these things will be tried and tested.

*If today He deign to bless us  
With a sense of pardoned sin,  
Perhaps tomorrow He'll distress us,  
Make us feel the plague within;  
All to make us,  
Sick of self and fond of Him. (Gadsby's 758)*

His dear Son needed to be upheld; "Behold My servant whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth." and if the Lord of life and glory needed to be upheld, how much more shall we. But these are the lame that take the prey; these are the last that shall be first. We shall have to prove this, but it will make the things of God most precious. The manifestation of His love and mercy, the sweet communications from heaven to earth when He sends you help from heaven, and strengthens you out of Zion, O then it is that He brings you to the very gate of heaven. It is from these changes my friends, that you will live to prove that it is the Lord from first to last, and if ever we are saved it must be free and sovereign grace.

'Uphold me according unto Thy word, that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope.' But Paul came to the end of his journey - and it was a journey, he suffered much; he suffered from his own countrymen, from the Jews he suffered 40 stripes save one. He was shipwrecked, he died daily, there were days when neither sun, moon nor stars appeared, he was in the depths, but he said to Timothy, 'I am not ashamed, Timothy, not ashamed of my hope, my faith; it stands in the power of God. It brought me through, by the Spirit, all those storms and tempests, all those trials and distresses; I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed.' Here was the secret, he knew Him -

and one great way by which we know Him and His touch is by bringing us into these extremities. We may well consider what our knowledge of the Lord is. That is a blessed word I feel of the Apostle, "I know Whom I have believed." 'I am not ashamed of Him, not ashamed of my hope in Him, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' Have you committed anything unto Him? Doubtless some of you have laid up a good foundation against the day of death, laid up many prayers for that solemn hour, and you have had here and there a sweet hope that at last you will be found in Him; but O when it is tested, you will pray this text! 'Uphold me according unto Thy word, that I may live; let me not be ashamed of my hope.' But he repeats it in the next verse. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." The first is 'Uphold me', the next is "Hold me up." They are not just the same thing. To uphold one is to get something underneath to uphold him, and you feel to need something laid beneath you, a foundation; you need the everlasting arms to be underneath you. 'Uphold me', and then "Hold me up." You feel to need to be upheld from above as well as from underneath. Similar to that word in the 31st Psalm, "Lead me and guide me." Uphold me and hold me up. O how it does introduce all the wisdom and power and grace and love and mercy of the Lord Jesus in the safety of His people. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear Him;" and those mountains represent His divine perfections, His attributes. And when faith sees that, sees all divine perfections meet in a dear Redeemer, a Mediator, an elder Brother, why, what safety there is! Then you hang upon Him. As Isaiah speaks of it - "The Lord fixes him as a nail in a sure place", and His people hang upon Him, hang all their hopes upon Him.

It is very blessed to see one coming out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved. 'Uphold me according unto Thy word, that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope at last!' Do you ever call your dying day to view? How solemn it will be when I come to my end, and the end of all my public ministry and those that have heard me, if I should make shipwreck at last and be ashamed of my hope! I can say this, I should never be ashamed of the Gospel, I should never be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, but O I do pray that I may never be ashamed of my hope at last, but that faith may send forth her fervent cry and die in peace with God.

'Uphold me according to Thy word, and let me not be ashamed of my hope.' "Hold Thou me up., and I shall be safe." I have looked at that word sometimes and it seems so blessedly definite. "Hold Thou me up", nothing between the two - "Thou and me" and you want nothing between the two that would ever be an hindrance. O then, may the Lord help His poor people that are agitated in mind, who may be passing through great temptations, who feel that their hope is lost, that they are cut off for their parts, who see not their signs, who look with trembling to the future, who feel ashamed of the past and can put nothing together! Why, my friends, the Lord could alter the scene in a moment. You read the 37th Ezekiel concerning the dry bones; the Lord can do that again and ask Him to revive you according to the 37th Ezekiel. I have laid that chapter before Him and prayed according to that word, or it may be under a sense of your depraved nature, your backslidings, your unfaithfulness, you have read the 36th chapter of Ezekiel, its blessed 'shalls' and 'wills'; "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you, a new heart will I put within you, I will put my Spirit within you and you shall live." And you bring that, bring it to the throne of grace and say 'Do it Lord, do it for Thy names sake according to Thy word.'

Amen.