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Sermon preached at "Bethel" Chapel, Rye, by Mr. H. DAWSON,
on Tuesday evening, 7th April, 1953.

TEXT: II Timothy 2. v. 19.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal,
The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth
the Name of Christ depart from iniquity."

THIS is a word which will afford sinners taught of God peace within, whatever times of trouble may be raging without, as it is made to be a living word in their souls' experience. There is in it a blessed foundation truth, and the setting of the subject is very instructive and helpful. I would like to say a little about it, first of all, as the Lord shall help me.

When an artist paints a picture, sometimes he puts in first a dark background, that the picture may be thrown out in relief upon it; and in this epistle to Timothy there is of a truth a dark background, for the apostle Paul, out of a full heart, as he was inspired of God, penned the epistle and set forth what should come to pass in the last days. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." It is a solemn reflection that you and I are living in those "last days," and those "perilous times" have come upon us; and yet you and I are living O, such long, long years since this epistle to Timothy was penned; but what is recorded in it has indeed come to pass, and is being fulfilled before our eyes. One thing is to me striking to contemplate, and that is, as you read the epistle to Timothy here and look a little as it were into the dark background, how solemn it is to think that while the church of Christ was as yet in its early history,—the days of Pentecost were not so far away in the past when the apostle penned his second epistle to Timothy; the Holy Spirit had been poured out in wonderful abundance, and the church of Christ had been established; great grace was seen upon those who belonged to it at the first; much of the power of the Holy Ghost was known as that church was increased and built up; but even while the apostles were still living, who had seen the church of Christ started on the day of Pentecost, and so wonderfully built up, yet they lived to see much error creeping in and evil abounding. And in this epistle to Timothy some of it is referred to by the apostle Paul, and he speaks of some, such as Hymenæus and Philetus, "who concerning the truth have erred;" and he gives good counsel to dear Timothy to "shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness."

Then in the following chapter he outlines a most solemn picture of what shall be in the last days when the perilous times shall come that he was inspired of God to prophesy.

Now that is the setting of the subject; *but*, in wondrous relief is this truth in the word I have read to you for a text.

"Nevertheless." O, what a good word it is! "Nevertheless;" however dark the days may be, and though the devil is let loose with

all hell at his beck and call to do all the mischief he can, and though error and evil abound, and the world seems overrun with it, and the godly may look upon it and their hearts fail at what their eyes look upon, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth *sure*." What does that mean? God is at work, doing that which He purposed to do when this world was built that He might bring to pass His purposes. Down through the ages God has been working out His purposes, and there is one scripture I love to dwell on in such times as these, especially when one looks around, and godliness seems at such a low ebb, and the church of Christ seems to be in such a declining state—as you and I look at it; I like to think of this great word, "And the Lord added unto the church *daily* such as should be saved." (Acts ii. 47). Do remember, dear friends, there is not any day that dawns but what the Holy Spirit is doing it. You and I may not see His labours, as it were, but north, south, east, and west, the Holy Spirit is adding to the church daily such as should be saved. Thus "the foundation of God standeth *sure*;" His eternal purposes are being brought to pass hour by hour. One hymnwriter puts it like this,

"See, my soul, the structure rising
From the wreck of Adam's race."

That is happening day by day; "Upon this rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Now, as the Lord shall help me, I want to look at this word from three or four viewpoints, and I should like to be helped to say something that might be helpful to you.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth *sure*." I will look first of all at the word "*sure*." It is a very suggestive word. What do you think you can put your hand upon beneath the sun and say of it, "It is *sure*"? Whatever your eyes light upon beneath the sun, O, it cannot be said to be *sure*, because it is passing and perishing. All that is to do with time is not *sure*, because it is not lasting. What is *sure* must be eternal in its nature. Remember that. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth *sure*," and nothing else but that which is of God can be *sure*.

Look at this word "*sure*" from one or two aspects of it to illustrate the truth I want to make plain. Think of health. You may have good health given to you, and it is to be prized, and used, as before God, and not abused. But even then, health is not *sure*.

"No present health can health insure,
For yet an hour to come;
No medicine, though it oft may cure,
Can always baulk the tomb."

The bloom of health may be on your cheek to-day, but to-morrow you may be at death's door through being sick.

Look at home life;—and there is that which is a beautiful picture in home life, if you go back to when you dwelt at home. Home life, when you are children growing up therein, is in your eyes an anchorage, and you look on it as *sure*; and it is, while you have

Father and Mother there; and you can run to it, and there you feel a measure of happiness because of what home life is. But the years roll on, and home life is made manifest as not being *sure*, because the family circle is broken into; death makes a gap, and you stand by the grave of Father, it may be, or Mother, and then home life is not the same as it was before; and ere long, as the years roll on, it is broken up altogether. Home life is not *sure*. And yet it is to be prized.

Then look at business life. A godly man may have his business, and the hand of God may be upon him for good therein, and for a while his business seems to go forward and he rejoices in days of prosperity. But even then it is to be made known that business must not be regarded as *sure*, because dark days may dawn; bad years may come, the markets may be variable, and things will come to pass so that what was a business that gave you pleasure and which was indeed a good business may decline and go down; and you learn that business is not *sure*.

Another thought I have had about it: take a church state, and even that is not to be regarded as *sure*. Many causes of truth of ours in their past history have known wonderful days, crowded pews, much of the power of God known in the preaching of His gospel therein, the church built up and added to frequently with godly additions. But the same causes of truth are dead and derelict, some of them; and in other instances, O, they have gone down, down, so that there is only a vestige of their former greatness to be seen, and the ways of Zion mourn, and few come to her solemn feasts. Even a church state must not be considered to be *sure*. I am not right down old, but I have lived long enough to see causes of truth that were crowded, where I have preached the gospel in the early days of my ministry, and they are dead, the causes of truth no longer exist, and yet it looked, long years ago, as though they were *sure*. A church state is not to be regarded as *sure*.

I have one other illustration about this word "*sure*." You may have a name to live, a name on a church roll, but you must not regard that "*name to live*" as being *sure*; for it is possible to have a name to live and be dead, and, as the apostle Paul tells dear Timothy in the epistle before us, have a form of godliness but no power attending it; a shell without a kernel; and that is a very solemn consideration. So that a name to live must not be regarded as a *sure* passport through the gates of pearl. Any religion that is but the doings of the great "*I*" is not *sure*. It will not abide; it will pass and perish. Yes! None of these things, then, is *sure*.

Now that brings us to this bedrock truth, if a thing is to be *sure*, it is something that is of God, and that alone can be *sure*. All that is of earth must perish, and all that is of man likewise. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth *sure*." The margin reading is, "*steady*;" and the meaning is that it is only that which is of God that will abide.

Now it will be a great mercy if grace is given to us in journey-

ing on through life to live in the light of such a truth as this, and to be like the wise builder who digged deep that he might get down to the foundation. The meaning is, to be concerned to have a religion that is of God, that when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, it will *abide* even as the house of the wise man, which fell not, for it was founded upon a *rock*. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure."

Let us look now, as the Lord may help us, at this "foundation of God." It is a wonderful help in such times as these to think upon the blessed truth that it does stand sure. All around us is uncertain and unstable. "The foundation of God standeth sure." Your mercy will be to be built upon it. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

And now, what does the "foundation of God" refer to? I said that it was that which is to do with God; and it means what He is as the sinners' Friend, and what He has done that poor sinners might be fitted for the skies.

First of all, look at it from this viewpoint: eternal purposes stand sure. I like to think of that truth as grace is given, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Eccles. iii. 1). This world is not being run by chance, or haphazard; although there is much happening therein that is hard to be understood, yet, "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33). The dear psalmist rejoiced at the end of life's journey to feel, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, *ordered in all things, and sure.*" Now, that is the foundation of all that God is doing in this poor, sin-cursed earth. God has made a covenant, everlasting in its nature, and all things beneath the sun are ordered in relation to what God designs to do in building up His church therein.

"Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise,
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command."

Now that is the foundation of God which standeth sure. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he rejoiceth in his way" (Ps. xxxvii. 23). "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." I can only give you hints, for the subject is so vast, and we shall only take as it were a bucketful out of the ocean depths therein. The everlasting covenant, then, is one thing to do with the foundation of God which standeth sure.

Now, Calvary's cross standeth sure. Mark the present tense, "standeth;" and remember, although these are the last days, and perilous times, and the whole world does indeed lie in wickedness, and, as the word is, "in the wicked one" (I John v. 19), yet Calvary's cross abides a blessed reality, and it is still a beautiful, blessed truth, to encourage you to hope in God: "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and that is a truth which *standeth*

sure, a truth to encourage you to hope in God. And what was done on Calvary's cross standeth sure. And *what* was done on Calvary's cross? That work which was given to Jesus Christ by His Father to do was brought to a blessed, wondrous fulfilment thereon, and that word went forth from Calvary's cross which made heaven to rejoice and hell to tremble,—*"It is finished."* Yes! And therein the foundation of God standeth sure.

"It is finished," said the Lord,
In His dying minute;
Holy Ghost, repeat the word,
Full salvation's in it."

Think on that word in Isaiah's prophecy, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." What a mercy it is, then, that Calvary's cross standeth sure! Much might be said along that line of thought.

The throne of grace still standeth sure. Mercy's door is still open. And I add this, how sure also is the Word of God, especially in its "exceeding great and precious promises."

"What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled."

When you take the Holy Bible, and the light of heaven shines upon the sacred pages therein, how sure is its blessed teaching! When you read what man writes you may question it, and sometimes you may dispute it and disprove it; but when you read the Holy Bible, as grace is given, you realise how sure it is, and you want to fall under it, and not fall out with it, and find, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

The Word of God—blessed be He Whose Word it is!—standeth sure, so that poor sinners in the midst of life's chaos and confusion, as it often seems to be, may look into the Word of God and see light upon the dealings of God with their souls, and find that the way they go is indeed the right way. "The entrance of Thy word giveth light," to make it plain.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." Remember also, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness standeth sure. For poor sinners who are made painfully aware of what sinners they are, and their great guiltiness before God as they are made to know more and more of the plague of the heart, the Word of God abideth sure, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from *all sin.*" "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure," in this respect,

"Jesus' blood through earth and skies
Mercy, eternal mercy, cries."

One more thought from this viewpoint of the subject: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." There is one outstanding thing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ,—blessed be His Name!—which standeth sure. I will read to you a word which often has given me help and hope, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden

altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev. viii. 4, 5). Here the foundation of God standeth sure: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And when you, as a poor sinner, realise, —and sweet it is to realise it,—the spirit of prayer given, and the grace of supplication, and you can plead, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," (although your attempts to pray may often make you feel, "O God, I blush and am ashamed to lift up my face unto Thee"), yet the infinite merits of Jesus Christ,—and that is what the incense sets forth,—the infinite merits of Jesus Christ perfume *your* petitions, and they ascend before God, and you and your petitions are made accepted in the Beloved. It is then you realise to your soul's joy, "The foundation of God standeth sure," and sometimes you plead like this:

"Founded on right, Thy prayer avails;
The Father smiles on Thee;
And now Thou in Thy kingdom art,
Dear Lord, remember me."

One other thought arises in my mind, which I will say a little on and that may be a help to you. Whatever God has done for your soul standeth sure. Remember that. You may be much tossed to and fro at times, and in heaviness through manifold temptations as to what God *has* done for your soul, because you cannot always see your signs. Sometimes you say with Job, "I go backward, and I cannot behold Him;" and you are cast down, and cannot feel as you would like to feel about the good work being begun within; and yet do think of this, whatever your frames or feelings may be at the present time will not undo what God has done for your soul heretofore. I say, what God has done for your soul standeth sure. Every Ebenezer you have set up, every Hill Mizar, abides and cannot be moved by earth or hell. And why? I told you at the outset that what is sure must be eternal in its nature, and what God does for your soul, if He is pleased to do it, is eternal in its nature. "I give unto My sheep *eternal life*."

"If once the love of Christ we feel
Upon our hearts impressed,
The mark of that celestial seal
Can never be erased."

Every little help you have had, and every hope that you have known and felt gladdening you before God and helping you still to hope for more, every answer to prayer, and whenever the gospel has been made the power of God in your soul, and any sweet touches you have had of the love of God shed abroad, or when the goodness of God has melted you, humbled you,—all these blessed evidences that God has been at work within you abide, because they are to do with the foundation of God which standeth sure, and "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Let us look at it from another viewpoint. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth

them that are *His*. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity." In this word, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," the people of God are set forth *as before God*. You and I do not always know them that are His, and we dare not take it for granted as to who are His, because you and I might make some sad and solemn mistakes. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Yea, a number which no man can number, redeemed from every kindred, tribe and tongue. "None, none shall e'er be lost." "The Lord knoweth them that are His;" and down through the ages He has been building them up on this foundation referred to in the text. "Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." Yes! How do you feel in thinking of it? Do you echo the hymn-writer's petition?—

"May I be found a living stone
In Salem's streets above,
And help to sing before the throne,
Free grace and dying love."

And now this other word: "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity," sets forth what the people of God are before men. Whenever you see the people of God—(you will know them as a people that "nameth the Name of Christ,")—O, they do depart from iniquity, and show Whose they are and Whom they serve in the life they live, because they do not live as worldlings do. "And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts iv. 13). "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." And it is that blessed principle that helps these people in the text, "every one that nameth the Name of Christ," to depart from iniquity. That is the life you and I want to live, as grace is given.

Let us look at this word: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." There is a deep that couches beneath in that truth, and it will help you along life's way when you can live in the light of it. "The Lord *knoweth*." What does that mean? This knowledge is His foreknowledge. The Lord knew them that are His before this world was built, or time was born, because the foundation of God was laid in eternal purposes, as I have tried to tell you; and it was then that the church of Christ was ordained to eternal life. So this knowledge in the text,—*"The Lord knoweth them that are His,"*—is foreknowledge. And He knew *you* and *me*, before any of us were born; and because He did,

"Parents, native place, and time,
All appointed were by Him."

"The Lord knoweth them that are His;" and this knowledge,—O that you and I might realise it!—is a Fatherly knowledge. All them that are His will, sooner or later, rejoice in that wonderful relationship. O, it is sweet to feel it:—"Our Father, Which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." You say, "I wish I could realise that knowledge gladdening *my* heart!" The Lord bless you, poor sinner! It is to be known; and who can tell but what God will be gracious unto you? You may have to wait awhile, but the day will

dawn when you shall realise what that sweet, blessed relationship is. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and you will know that you are His. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

Also this knowledge in the text,— "The Lord knoweth them that are His,"—is providing knowledge. I mean this, the Lord makes His goodness to pass before all these people of His, and it is a wonderful life to live. I do desire to thank God I know just a little of it. "And the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on" (Judges xiii. 19).

"Though we walk through this wilderness,
God's promise is our stay;
His goodness He will make to pass
Before us in the way."

And He delights to do it; and what you and I need is more grace to be on the look out for what God is doing for us. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." "The Lord knoweth them that are His;" and that knowledge is not only providing knowledge, but protecting knowledge. "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him," to protect them from earth and hell and to guarantee their safe journey through this poor, troubled world, and to ensure them an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

"A sovereign Protector I have,
Unseen, but for ever at hand."

"The Lord knoweth them that are His." Protecting knowledge.

I may sum it up by saying it is a comprehensive knowledge. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of *all these things*." Nothing shall be wanting to make these people of His meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His."

As I come to the Amen, let us look a little at this other word, as to what the people of God are before men. "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity." What a striking wording it is of what a profession of Jesus' Name really is! You say, "I have not got my name on a church roll." No. And why are you here? What have you come for, then? Have you come to get some good for your soul, if so be God will grant that mercy to you? Surely you are here because you *do* name the Name of Christ, and to you His Name has been, and is, "as ointment poured forth." You are here because the Name of Christ allures you. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." And if you are here desiring to be a true worshipper, then you are numbered with the people in the text: "Every one that *nameth* the Name of Christ." Such people as these are enjoined to depart from iniquity. All leaven must be swept up and cleared out of the house, that you may eat the Passover properly, and worship God aright. There must be no wrong thoughts, no evil surmising, no jealousy, no pride entertained; nothing wrong between brothers and sisters as they are in the attitude of worship;

but every one that nameth the Name of Christ must depart from iniquity and seek to be found like Cornelius puts it, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity." It comes, then, into the worship of God as oft as you gather together; and it comes into your everyday life.

"Let our lives and acts express
The holy gospel we profess."

I do like that beautiful word of the psalmist's, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." My dear friends, suffer a word of exhortation here: there needs to be a much closer cleaving to what this sets forth in our own denominational life ere there will be what many of us hope God will grant us to see, a gracious reviving in the midst of the years. There are right-eye sins to be plucked out, and right-hand sins to be cut off. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." "Every one that nameth the Name of Christ;"—O that every one might have more grace, and yet more, to be more in earnest in departing from iniquity!

"Nevertheless;" although this is such a poor, troubled world wherein iniquity abounds as never before, "nevertheless," the church of Christ is being built up in it. Be it our great concern to be found therein!

"This prayer and this ambition mine,
Living and dying, to be Thine!"

The Lord help you to lay these things to heart!

Amen.