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The Consolation of Israel

Sermon preached by Mr H. DAWSON at "Ebenezer" Chapel,
Hastings, on Wednesday evening, 20th July 1955

Text: Luke ii. 25

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel"

I should like to feel that this word sets forth the attitude in which many are found at this time. It is the attitude that you *must* be found in if you are to worship God aright. Good it will be if you can feel, "We are all here present before God to hear the things commanded of God," and if you find in your breast a petition rising, "I would hear what God the Lord would say for my soul's profit and peace". A great mercy it is when poor sinners are found in such an attitude of worship, and concerned to get something from God, something with a "Thus saith the Lord", something with the stamp of heaven upon it, something that will afford their never-dying souls consolation worth the name. Consolation worth the name must be something that is lasting; and must be for time and eternity too. Remember that! All earthly streams of consolation will dry up at the last and leave you to go out of time into an eternal state *just as you are*. You will step outside yourself; your soul, *you*, will step outside your clay tabernacle in which you have dwelt beneath the sun so many years, and you will step either into heaven or hell. A very solemn consideration! Good it will be if grace is given us to consider it.

Now I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at this subject from three or four viewpoints, and I should like to say something that God will own and bless to your soul's good. I hope you have a concern thus to hear what God the Lord will say to you, especially if you remember that you may be hearing the gospel for the last time. *That* is quite a possibility. I can be preaching my last sermon. I know I am in the latter days of my ministry, and I would like to preach with the consciousness, every time I preach, that I am preaching the gospel, it may be, for the last time.

"Careless, myself a dying man,
Of dying men's esteem;
Happy, O Lord, if Thou approve,
Though all beside condemn."

This word is to do with godly Simeon. I will look just a little at the setting of the subject; and it is very instructive, interesting, and striking. "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout." Oh, I do

admire (I speak with great reverence), I do admire how the Holy Spirit sums up that religion of which *He* is the Author, often with such wonderful brevity. Here are three words, "just and devout". It tells you all that you need to be told about Simeon. Just—and that is what he was before men with whom he had to do; just. Devout—and that is what he was when he appeared before God. A good, old-fashioned word, devout. He was concerned to worship God aright. Devout. It would be good if many folk found in our pews could get deeper down into the meaning of the word, devout. Such folk would then be saying "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed," and you would realize in the attitude of worship it would not be that you were, as it were, one in the congregation, one of a number; it would be God and you; *you* worshipping *God*; *you* before God. I want you to think on these things, because you must have some religion like that which was wrought in Simeon's breast, or you will be lost. Do you think you have got it? I wish you well. I am not here to frighten you or to flatter you, but to say something that shall help you in things divine and bring you down to bedrock in your soul's experience, that you may realize matters are right between God and you. You must not take such things for granted, or think because you are attached to a cause of truth that is orthodox things will be well with you. You must get something from God, I say again. "Give diligence to make your calling and your election sure." "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." And remember, with all your chapel-going, it is what you get from God that makes up your religion and makes it manifest as that which God has wrought in you, and not just the coming and going all your life long. No!

Here, then, is this dear Simeon, "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel." God had made it plain in Simeon's understanding that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. He was living his life, now he was old and grey headed, on the stretch for that day when Jesus Christ should be "born a Babe by birth mysterious."

I look just a little at the history of it ere I come to open up the subject as I want to do, as the Lord shall help me. "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Mark that word, "revealed". Everything hinges on that in our religion. It is not what you can gain by dint of study, or by the means of education. "God never meant that man should scale the heavens by strides of human wisdom." Religion that is of God must be revealed. God alone can make it known in a poor sinner's breast. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." It is good to remember that. And oh, if you can, join with the dear psalmist, "Open Thou mine eyes [margin reading: 'Reveal to mine eyes'], that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." The most wonderful thing to be

revealed is your own part and lot in the word of God, so that you are made a happy subject of the salvation of God to your soul's joy. Then, then, you know what "the consolation of Israel" is. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

Now Simeon had to live the life of the righteous like that, and he had this wondrous revelation; and I do like how this is worded: "And he came by the Spirit into the temple." Do you always come like that into the temple? As far as you are concerned, this house of prayer is the equivalent of the temple for you, where God is worshipped; but do you always come by the Spirit into it? You know, if you tell the truth, that you come very cursorily sometimes, not much going on between God and you in coming. You are not always exercised unto godliness, are you? You are not always sowing in tears if so be you may reap in joy. Sometimes you come into the temple very mechanically. Be ashamed of yourself, if you can! Ask God to help you by His grace to lay these things to heart and, that you, and the preacher, too, may know more of this wonderful mercy, to come into the temple to worship God under the sweet, gracious anointing of the Spirit. Oh that there might be more worship of God known and felt amongst us like that! Is it not a beautiful word, "And he came by the Spirit into the temple"? Whenever you do come like that in some little measure, and feel that you are in a right mind and right spirit, you will get something from God. When this dear Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple, God had ordained that was to be the wondrous moment when he should see Jesus. Yes! "When the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen *Thy salvation!*" How highly favoured was Simeon beyond all our words to describe! I have thought sometimes that Simeon's heaven, if it can be possible, must be two heavens, as he thinks upon the wondrous fact that he held in his arms Jesus Christ as verily Man, a Babe, Him who is verily Man, verily God. "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see." You and I need to do what Moses did before the burning bush in the contemplation of this great theme, take off our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. And yet it was a wondrous experience granted to dear Simeon long ago.

I sometimes wonder—I say this with great reverence—I have sometimes wondered if Simeon did not feel in his breast somewhat of surprise when he said (remember that he was inspired of God to say all this!) "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles." You ought to sing the Doxology in your heart when you think on that line! "A light to lighten the Gentiles." You and I are Gentiles! And godly Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of *Israel!*" But it was unfolded to him, revealed, that Jew and Gentile in Christ

Jesus are to be one; "the middle wall of partition" is to be broken down. Yes, "a light to lighten the Gentiles". What an amazing mercy if this blessed light has lightened your heart, my heart!

"If in my soul Thy Spirit's ray
Has ever turned my night to day,
I bless Thee for the same."

Wonderful it is if you and I have been made to differ from the world at large, and if that word has been fulfilled to us, "The eyes of the blind shall be opened." Do you think you could say as much as this, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"? He, who was born long ago, and laid in the manger cradle at Bethlehem, "a light to lighten the Gentiles," has lighted a candle in your breast, the light of life. You remember the psalmist said, "For Thou wilt light my candle." Has He lighted a candle in you? "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." Remember what you read in the epistle to the Hebrews (I have thought of it sometimes with a little help and comfort) as the apostle Paul, in dealing with the Hebrews, seeking to encourage them to hope in God, refers them to how they were born again, and then he says, "After ye were illuminated". Have you been *illuminated*? "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." A wonderful mercy if there is within one's breast that good work begun; what the hymnwriter refers to:

"Nor present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark divine."

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." Having looked a little at the setting of the subject as regards Simeon, I would look at the subject from this viewpoint: "waiting for the consolation of *Israel*". The word of God causes us to search into the matter in as much as it is declared that they are not all Israel who say they are of Israel.

"A solemn thing a saint to appear,
Grow up with wheat and be a tare."

That needs to be considered, for it is a possibility to have a name to live and be dead, to have a form of godliness and no power attending it, and yet to be found in the attitude of worship. The apostle Paul says, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit . . . and have no confidence in the flesh;" and there is the hallmark of an "Israelite indeed". Do you possess it? Do I? The dear Saviour said concerning Nathaniel, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." What does that mean? "One who is honest-hearted by the grace I have communicated to him." This word will help you to understand it: "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." You will be concerned, if you are born again, to know that you are an "Israelite indeed." You will want some sweet, solid assurance such as the Holy Spirit alone can communicate; and that

alone will be to you "the consolation of Israel" in your soul's experience.

"Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood,
And bear Thy witness with my heart
That I am born of God."

Sometimes you will be *disconsolate*, because you are not sure that you are born of God. Are you sure? It is not every day that you feel as you want to feel about it, but you have some dark days when all your evidences seem to be obscured, and you hardly know what you are, where you are; and then you can only sigh and cry and groan: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Aye, you want consolation such as God alone can communicate. "Waiting for the consolation of Israel."

Then the next thought in my mind is this, it is good if God has given to you and me a true, scriptural standard of what is consolation. Ask the man in the street what he judges consolation to be, and he will relate it to the things of this life alone; he has no other standard; because, being in the world and of it, he can only judge what is consolation as it fits in with his carnal mind. Remember that! And "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" therefore the man in the street has no idea of consolation that comes from God as the sinner's Friend, whereby a poor sinner can rejoice in hope of eternal life. No, No! Let the worldling have the ale glass, or the card pack, or be at the pictures, or on the sporting field, or in the world where the carnal mind is eased and pleased—anywhere—and he calls that consolation; although it is passing and perishing, and it does pass and perish, and leaves him with nothing to show worth while. It is just like a bubble; when it is blown you look on its pretty colours, and it bursts, and there is nothing left. So it is with the worldling who lives his life seeking to find consolation for the carnal mind at earth's polluted springs; and he finds at the last disappointment, disillusion, and learns what Solomon declares, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit".

The consolation of Israel is that which is spiritual in its nature; the consolation that solaces and satisfies our never-dying souls. Is that the standard you have got set up in your heart, your conscience, as to what consolation is? "I seek and hope to find a portion for my soul"? Is that the attitude you are in, "waiting for the consolation of Israel"?

I want to show you, as the Lord shall help me, how, if you are "an Israelite indeed", you will find every day there is a solemn needs be for this consolation designated "the consolation of Israel". What you are by nature as a sinner will often undo you; indwelling sin will make sad havoc within; the plague of the heart known and felt will make you oh so disconsolate; and you will have to appear before God and

tell Him all the truth: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," a disconsolate sinner! You want consolation such as God alone can communicate, consolation that will relieve your troubled breast and inspire you with good hope through grace, and help you to go on feeling you do possess an interest in what was done on Calvary's cross. Be thankful, especially the dear young people, if God has set up in your heart, your conscience, a standard of what consolation really is, and you are after it. The Lord bless you!

"Thou shalt obtain the blessing yet;
Jesus will not thy cries forget."

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." And meanwhile, in your varied experiences wherein you feel oh so disconsolate, you find deep down an aching void which this world cannot fill; and that aching void proceeds from life divine. It can be found only in a new heart; and it arises from a new spirit which God has put within you. Yes; and it will help you to look round the world in which you live and see all the world has got to offer of what worldlings judge consolation to be, and you will take your stand alongside one hymnwriter:

"Boast not ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes;
Above your highest mirth
Our saddest hours we prize;
For though our cup seems filled with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all;"

and that "something secret" bespeaks "the consolation of Israel". None but "Israelites indeed" can know it and feel it. Remember that!

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." And now, when all is said and done, Jesus Christ in all that He is as the sinner's Friend is the consolation of Israel; and I would be glad if I could get some help from the Holy Spirit to so lift Him up that you might esteem Him as the consolation of Israel. When you seek, as this dear Simeon, and you are waiting for the consolation of Israel, is it not the truth that you have a feeling like this,

"Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright reality"?

"That I may win Christ, and be found in Him; . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." Jesus Christ is the consolation of Israel when you think of who He is. He is verily God; verily Man. Oh think of it! Ask the Lord to help you to contemplate the amazing mystery of it! "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh;" and as God in our nature, Immanuel, God with us, He is known as the consolation of Israel, for "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus". When you, as a poor sinner,

would draw near to God and tell Him all the truth as to your case your circumstances, and yet find, in your attempts to do so, "I would, but cannot, pray, Oh there is sometimes the consolation of Israel revealed when it is known and felt;

"Since my Saviour stands between
In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God."

"For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." Yes, Jesus Christ is the consolation of Israel, when you think of who He is.

"Whom, though we cannot comprehend,
Feeling Thou art the sinner's Friend,
We love Thee, and adore."

He is the consolation of Israel in *all* that He is. In whatever viewpoint you contemplate Him as the sinner's Friend, you will find consolation, sweet, satisfying consolation. Think on His power: "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Think on His love: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Think on His mercy:

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

Oh the magnitude of it! "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Think, too, on His wisdom, and remember, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it *shall be given him*." You shall have that consolation to receive wisdom from above enabling you to handle matters wisely, and find good for your soul; and oh, the rich consolation there is when you can of a truth commit your way unto God, trust also in Him, and see Him bring to pass your soul's desires! Sweet life to live! "And the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife *looked on*." "Waiting for the consolation of Israel."

Think, too, of the consolation there is when you dwell in your thoughts—I love to do it as help is given—on the life that Jesus lived as verily Man, verily God. There is wondrous consolation in the contemplation of it. As you look at your life as you have lived it, what a shoddy affair it is! The more you look into it, the more fault is to be found therein. Sins in thought, word, and deed, testify against you; sins of omission, sins of commission. "No sinner needed mercy more than ever sought Thy face," is how you feel when, in heaven's own light, you contemplate *your* life as you have lived it hitherto. And then you turn from it, and think of Jesus Christ and the life that He lived, and remember,

"In Him the Father never saw
The least transgression of His law;
Perfection, then, in Him we view;
His saints in Him are perfect, too."

Oh the wondrous consolation when you realize that the dear Saviour lived that life that poor sinners like you and me, who have no righteousness of our own wherein to appear before God, might be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light!

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel"; and what consolation there is when you think of the death that Jesus Christ died, when He died in the stead of poor sinners like you and me! Oh, that "scene of matchless grace; 'tis Jesus in the sinner's place!" And when you feel as you do, and wonder at times if you have any godliness, and then you light on a scripture like this, "Christ died for the ungodly," and something says, "Who can tell but what God will be gracious unto me?" Hope springs up, and you get a little consolation in the prospect of it.

"Though by my sins deserving hell
I'll not despair, for who can tell?"

And who *can* tell? There is but one; the dear Holy Spirit is His Name. Ask Him! "Tell me, oh Thou whom my soul loveth!" Let that be your attitude, "waiting for the consolation of Israel". Ask Him to make matters right between Him and you, as He alone can do, and put the great question out of question, that you may rejoice in a part and lot in the salvation of God.

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." In the life that He lived as verily Man, and the death He died, He did it as verily Man, verily God in our nature, that all "Israelites indeed" might have the wondrous benefit of it. He *had* to become verily Man to do it, to live and to die; but who He was as verily God gave all that He did in the life He lived and the death He died validity, authority, availability, for all the Israel of God. Remember that! And therein is the consolation of Israel in an ocean fulness to be known. "Waiting for the consolation of Israel."

If time allowed I would have said just a little about the consolation there is in the offices that Jesus fills, and in the blessed Names that He bears. But when all is said and done, when you think of Him as the sinner's Friend, oh the consolation there is to contemplate Him in that blessed character which He so sustains!

"No sinner was ever yet empty sent back,
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus's sake."

What consolation there is sometimes when you remember Him as our Advocate on high! "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Good it is to remember,

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives;
What joy this blessed assurance gives!
And now, before His Father, God,
Pleads the full merit of His blood."

The hymnwriter says, "What joy this blessed assurance gives". And it does! Oh, that is consolation, of a truth, to realize that Jesus Christ appears in the presence of God for us. Much might be said

along that line of thought.

Then there is this consolation of Israel to be known, when you think that "salvation is of the Lord" in every jot and tittle of it. The words are often quoted by preachers and people—they are very familiar to us: "Salvation is of the Lord"; but if you and I are to learn it aright and to know the truth of it, it might be that you will have to be like Jonah who went into the belly of hell to learn it. It is not just accepting it as an article of faith. No, no! It is for you to go down to the bottoms of the mountains as Jonah did, and realize, "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores"; and to come to this in your soul's experience, "Lord, save, or I perish!" Then, then, you know "salvation is of the Lord"; and how glad you are that "love's redeeming work is done!" "It is finished"; this is "the consolation of Israel".

I look at this subject, as I come towards the Amen, from one other viewpoint. There was the attitude that godly Simeon was found in: "*waiting* for the consolation of Israel". Waiting grace is very valuable; and I sometimes think it seems very scarce. The dealings of God with His people sometimes are in accordance with a word you will read in Daniel's prophecy, "The thing was true, but the time appointed was long". You and I have got to learn another scripture: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God—*after* ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." It may be the will of God is that, in this matter or that which you lay at Jesus' feet, you are to wait. You are to wait *His* time. "Your time is alway ready: My time is not yet come to make this matter plain before you and show you the why and wherefore of My dealings with you." And it needs much grace when you are asked to wait, and you wait week in, week out, month in, month out, and it may be year in and year out. In the word of God you will find some people had to wait oh such a long, long while. Look at godly Caleb, who followed the Lord fully; he had to wait forty-five years before he could dwell in Hebron, which was his allotted portion in the land of promise; and that was a long waiting time. Yet Caleb, "followed the Lord fully", and he waited, and he did not wait in vain. Neither will you. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." Do remember this:

"A time He has set to heal up your woes,
A season most fit His love to disclose;
And till He is ready to show His good will,
Be patient, and steady, and wait on Him still."

"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." And you have this to encourage you in the waiting; some of you, you have had some consolation; "here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept", it may be. You cannot say much about it as to any deep things that you have gone down into, or heights that you have attained to, but

you are not altogether strangers to what the consolation of Israel is. You have had now and then a drop of heaven let down into your never-dying soul; and every drop is the earnest that, when you get down to the journey's end, you will reach the fountain head from whence it flowed to you. Remember that! And meanwhile, try to live like this,

"All through the wilderness below,
Good hope expects more good to know;
And thus is kept alive
The soul."

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." I would say this, do remember that, while Jesus Christ is the consolation of Israel, the Holy Spirit alone is the Consoler of Israel. He, and He alone, can take of the things of Jesus and make them to be precious in your soul's esteem, and He delights to do it; and you delight for Him to do it. Oh, it is so desirable!

"Convince us of our sin,
Then lead to Jesus' blood,
And to our wondering view reveal
The secret love of God."

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." Now God has ordained waiting places, as it were; and we call them means of grace. The word of God puts it like this, "In all places where I record My Name will I come unto thee, and I will bless thee." If you are concerned of a truth to know more of the consolation of Israel, then I would counsel you to be found in the means of grace, public and private, as every opportunity arises. The Lord bless you as you follow on to know Him and His truth. You must admit that sometimes in the means of grace you have got some consolation. You do not get it always; but then, you are not always exercised unto godliness to obtain it, are you? No! Sometimes, when you gather together in the attitude of worship, you *have* found consolation. It may be singing the songs of Zion. Sometimes you make melody in your heart and sing praises with understanding; and sometimes you sing the hymn, and the tune captivates you, and there is no consolation in it. No, it is what goes on between God and you. "That Thou givest them they gather." Sometimes when you read the word of God—and do prize when you find in your heart a concern to read it, and do then search the scriptures diligently, and you shall find consolation therein. You may say with the psalmist, "I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Sometimes when you hear the gospel preached you find it to be good tidings of great joy, and it affords you sweet consolation; the memory of it is sweet. Maybe some of you who are now grey-headed look back over the long, long years, and remember this preacher and that whom God helped to preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and you got consolation in your soul's experience; and you remember it with a sacred pleasure, and the preacher's name is remembered, too. "The memory of the just is

blessed" in that sense. In the gospel there is indeed a fulness of consolation.

"Oh, what amazing words of grace
Are in the gospel found,
Suited to every sinner's case,
Who knows the joyful sound."

You will find much consolation, too, when you try to pray. And that is all you can do, *try* to pray. Sometimes there seems no prayer in you. Many a time I have looked at the margin reading in James' epistle, "And Elijah prayed in his prayer", and I have wished I could pray like that. Sometimes you get just a little help to do it. Oh, the consolation there is then! "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength"; and you say with Asaph, "It is good for me to draw near to God".

Then there is consolation when you can do this—I do not think people nowadays know very much about it—"My meditation of Him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord". The dear psalmist said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." Oh, sweet, blessed grace of meditation, when you can consider Christ Jesus and see in Him all your salvation and all your desire!

There is consolation, too, when you remember the way God has led you; and you look back, and in heaven's own light you set up waymarks and make high heaps, recording bygone experiences; and as you look and look again along life's way, and see how goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life, you can only say, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, would He have shown us all these things?"

"Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

And now, every little bit of the consolation of Israel that you have ever known and felt is but like the grapes from Eshcol which the spies brought back from the land of promise, to show what grew in bulk therein. Every little bit of consolation that God bestows upon you as you journey on through life is but the earnest of what you will know in an eternal fulness when you arrive at the fountain head from whence it flows. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." And I will keep you a minute to tell you this: if you have known this great mercy, to find that Jesus Christ has been to you, and still is, "the consolation of Israel" as you have lived your life hitherto, you will find when you come down into Jordan's swelling that He will not fail you. He will be *there* to console you when you come to that solemn hour when heart and flesh shall fail, and you will find the bottom good in Jordan's swelling, and realize dying grace to be granted in a dying hour.

The Lord help you to lay these things to heart! *Amen.*