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## GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday evening 29.8.73

Hymns 988, 454, 1101,

73/P

Reading Joshua 1

Text Joshua 1.5

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

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These chapters mark a very important period in the history of the children of Israel, for they were about to pass over Jordan, and the Lord condescended graciously to confirm His servant Joshua in that He would be with him, and that there should not be any man able to stand before him. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee". There is something very sweet about this. Later on in the chapter we find that the people answered Joshua and said, "Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses". There seems something particular in that reference, the Lord was with Moses, for it is true that Moses' successor had great need of the same blessed promise, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee".

What can be really sweeter than to feel to receive something from the Lord in a time of need? Perhaps I might just say that on Monday on my way to Barton, when I arrived at St. Pancras station, knowing the disturbing conditions prevailing, especially at these northern stations, I felt a little disturbed; but, as I was going up some steps at the station these words came in so sweetly that they quite broke me down, "The Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee", and they had such a quieting effect upon my mind, that they removed all my apprehensions. I had a sweet little time, and I felt what can I desire more than this, if the Lord should condescend to be with me, and go before me. Whatever our enemies might attempt upon us, all His people are safe in His blessed hands. I had a safe journey, and we had a good day in the sanctuary.

My first point here then is to refer to the fact that the Lord was with Moses which is mentioned twice; "As I was with Moses

so I will be with thee" and, "Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses". The Lord was with Moses from the beginning, as we read in Exodus 3.12 when Moses was at the burning bush, where the Lord addressed him, and commissioned him to go and be the deliverer of His people, to bring them forth instrumentally from their long and bitter bondage. Moses objected to this commission and said who am I that I should do such a thing as this, and he felt it, but the Lord said to him, "Certainly I will be with thee". That appears to be the first indication of the Lord's gracious word and promise that He would be with him; and so He was; Moses was the instrument in the Lord's hands to bring them forth from their long and bitter bondage but it was all the Lord's doing. All the plagues were the Lord's doing to bring the Egyptians down, but He was with His servant Moses to bring His people forth and be their leader. Truly the Lord was with Moses when they came to the Red Sea. The Lord did not say 'you take a short cut straight along there by the coast and go into the land of Caanan - it is not very far! No, that was not the Lord's way; they were commanded to turn and go down to Pi-ha-hi-roth between Migdol and the sea, where the Lord said He would be honoured upon Pharaoh. Truly He moves in a mysterious way, but He never moves in a wrong way, or makes a mistake in the way. He brought them down there where they were confronted with the sea before them and the Egyptians behind them, and they soon began to murmur and wish they were back in Egypt; but Moses was the means in the hand of the Lord of a deliverance there. The Lord was with Moses. "Stretch out thine hand over the sea" - and Moses stretched forth his hand and the waters piled up on both sides so that there was a way through; and they went through. Truly the Lord was with Moses on that occasion and many other occasions as well.

The promise here is from the Lord to Joshua, "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee", and as no Scripture is of private interpretation this can be a plea with the Lord's people that the Lord will be with them. This can be a plea with you or myself, and probably it has been many times, that the Lord would be with us; and truly the Lord has fulfilled it has He not - not to deliver us

from any trouble so that we should be immune from afflictions or distressing circumstances, for it is affirmed of the Lord's people that "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God". It is not designed therefore to be all plain sailing, all clear skies, the sun shining all the time. There will be clouds, storms and tempests, and sometimes many difficult and painful providences, losses, bereavements, and sometimes hard things are shown the Lord's people, but all these things give point to the promise, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee", as though we might say 'You will have your trials or afflictions, or hard things, and it may be many painful things to bear with', but the Lord has said, "I will be with thee".

Has it not often been when the Lord's people are in a furnace of trial, some affliction, some distressing circumstances, or some heavy trial of faith, that the Lord has been with them as He was with Moses? Cannot some of you endorse this precious truth, and has He not been with you at times in the path of trial and affliction, for this is where the Lord has said He will make His promise good as we have it in Isaiah 43 - "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee". He does not go along with His people to the waters, rivers and fire and then forsake them when most they need Him. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee". This has been proved as we read in the Scripture, in the case of the three Hebrews. The Lord was with them in the furnace, they would not bow to the idol the king had set up, and they did not fear the consequences whatever they might be. The furnace was made seven times hotter, - it was hot enough before, but it was made seven times hotter - and they were cast into it; but when the king looked into the furnace he was astonished, and said, There are four walking in the fire and the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God - a remarkable thing for a heathen king to say - but there He was walking with them in the fire. Has the Lord ever walked with you in a fire? Has there been a moment in your life when He has made the bitter sweet, and the furnace a place of blessing? Can

some of you look back to a spot or place where the Lord came to you and made His promise sweet? This may have been in a hospital, and I believe I have known this, or it may have been in some other circumstance; but whatever the circumstance may have been, as soon as the Lord comes He puts the fire out, or prevents the fire from doing any harm except that it be for a cleansing and refining purpose.

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee". He is a promise-performing God. Many, many times through the Old Testament, and in the New Testament in a Gospel way, we find that the Lord was with His people. Sometimes He is with them to support them, not necessarily to take the trial away, (although sometimes He has done this), but to support His people in their trials. This seemed to be the case with the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and actually I do not know any gracious person that has not; but the Apostle prayed for the thorn in the flesh to be removed. He prayed three times, but when the Lord did speak He said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness", the Apostle received it and was able to say, Most gladly therefore, will I glory in my infirmities" instead of praying hard for the Lord to take them away. His presence really felt is very, very sweet. He can support in a furnace of trial.

Sometimes His presence has been to guide His people in their providences, to go before them as it is in the 31st. Deuteronomy, "The Lord He it is that doth go before thee, He will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee". There is something very beautiful about this; the Lord has gone before His people from all eternity. He went before them in the covenant of grace that He made with them, He went before them when He sent His beloved Son to redeem them, He went before them when He sent forth His good Spirit to be their comforter and Teacher. Has the Lord ever gone before you in anything? When these Israelites came to the Red Sea, as you know they murmured, but Moses cried unto the Lord and the Lord said, "Wherefore criest thou unto me, speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward, and Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew

to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever", not 'You will see them again the other side of the sea', but you will see them again no more for ever. I wonder whether the Lord has ever drowned an Egyptian for you so that you have never seen him again, or destroyed an enemy so that it could never rise up against you again. They had many enemies later in their history but never those Egyptians again.

Moses, as we know, failed on one occasion and was forbidden to enter into the promised land; but Joshua was raised up to succeed him and he led the people through Jordan into the land of promise. "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee". As we think of days to come and our poor, frail, mortal life, and that with some of us it cannot be very long, we need this blessed promise, for when applied it removes all fear. His presence brings a sacred quietness when it is felt, however much you may have been disturbed, tossed about and tempted and burdened and tried before; when the Lord comes by His good Spirit into your heart and you feel His sweet presence there, it removes everything else, and you fall into His hands. It brings a sweet quietness, a sweet submission. It is the best way of gaining the victory. However hard you may try to fight against something, if it is in your own strength you will lose the battle; but if the Lord comes into your heart and favours you with His presence, then the devil skulks away, and you can cast your care upon Him, you can cast your soul upon Him, all your circumstances, your future and life, death, and all beside that concerns you, you can cast it into His blessed hands and feel just then a sweet rest, a wonderful rest. I know that is true because I have felt it myself. But we cannot command it; and we may know much more of the other side, more of the tempest tossing, and battles with the enemy; but even so if the Lord comes with His powerful presence you have gained the victory and you come off more than conqueror, not because you have conquered, but because the Lord has conquered for you.

"As I was with Moses". It is a beautiful word, but it may be with us that we may have had to turn it into a prayer and say, 'Lord as Thou wast with Moses so wilt Thou condescend to be with a

worthless worm like me, I feel to be a poor helpless thing in myself; but hold Thou me up, bear me through and enable me to endure unto the end'. There is something particular about this, as they answered Joshua "Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses", as though they would say, 'you do not need anything more and neither do we if the Lord is pleased to be with us as He was with Moses.' They were particular circumstances I know but yours are particular circumstances to you; they are your matters, and they are very particular, some of them. I wonder if you have ever tried to pray like this, 'Lord as Thou wast with Moses so wilt Thou be with me to guide me, hold me up, bring me through and prepare me for my latter end.'

"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee". Sometimes we fail in things, and perhaps it is as well we should to bring us to feel our dependence upon the Lord's help and grace, but the Lord has never failed in a promise that He has made. We can go right back to an eternal past and contemplate there a promise-performing God unto His people and He has never failed them. His love has ever been toward them for He has loved them with an everlasting love. "I will not fail thee." He will not fail us if we are His in the salvation of our never-dying souls. Of this we may have many fears as to how it will be with us when we come to the end and we shall need Him then. He has said, "I will not fail thee".

When the fulness of the time came the Lord Jesus Christ appeared upon this earth, He did not fail, He did not fail to accomplish all that was committed to Him, as it is said in the Old Testament here, "He will not fail nor be discouraged". He did not fail to complete the work of redemption, He did not fail to appease the claims of justice, He did not fail to pay the ransom price to deliver His people from the curse of a broken law. He did not fail to rise again from the dead and to ascend up into heaven and He does not fail now to carry on the cause of His people there. So then in a Gospel sense, dear friends, we have an unfailing Saviour, Who is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. "I will not fail thee". It is a very blessed promise, it is like saying, 'Cast your care upon me I will not fail thee'. You have

your cares, your anxieties, your burdens, your difficulties, your sins, and many things that may often bring heaviness and cause your heart to stoop, but He has said "I will not fail thee"; and so it is that a poor helpless, sin-burdened one is invited to cast his care, his burden, upon the Lord Who said in the days of His flesh, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest".

"I will not fail thee". So many of the Lord's people have proved it in their providences and have found prayer to be the most effective weapon in some of their heavy trials and the Lord has not failed them. Some of you may have been able to look back to a prayer-answering God when you have come to the end of everything in your own feelings, but you have never come to the end of the power of God or of His promise, "I will not fail thee". It is as though He would say 'Put your trust in Me', as we have it in the Proverbs, "Trust in the Lord, and lean not to thine own understanding". Trust only in the Lord, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee". Although sometimes He hides His face from His people, and the days of darkness are many, yet if your name and mine are in that book, friends, of which we read in the Revelation, if our names are there in His remembrance-book, He will never fail us, and neither will He forsake us. I have read in "Gleanings from Highland Harvest" of a minister mentioning an old soldier who said that he had never seen his name in the big book but he said, 'I know it is there because I receive my pension regularly, so I know it is there'. If the Lord is pleased to come and bless your soul you can say, 'I know it is there'. We cannot ascend up into heaven and search it out for ourselves but if the Lord is pleased to come down from heaven and bless His poor dear people in their souls it can be for the time being as though they were in heaven. "I will not fail thee". He will not fail to fulfil the covenant He has made with His people, He will not fail to raise their bodies in the last day when the Lord shall come again and gather them all up to be with Himself for ever. O may the Lord grant us a token that can be a help, for God is approachable and what a mercy that is for us! A new and living way has been opened for poor sinners deserving hell. Moreover, He does not fail them, so we may feel some encouragement in this word as I have felt myself, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee". Amen

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