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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 30 October 1921

2 THESSALONIANS 2 v 16/17

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even
our Father, which hath loved us, and hath
given us everlasting consolation and
good hope through grace, comfort your hearts,
and stablish you in every good word
and work"

This solemn and gracious text contains everything that is needful for life and godliness, for time, and eternity. We can conceive nothing respecting our immortal souls, respecting their passage through time, that is not contained in this Scripture, and I cannot hope to do justice to it; it is so full. And I hope to be able to show you this evening that in it is the eternal Trinity. This morning I spoke upon the 16 verse and endeavoured to set before you the eternal Deity of Jesus Christ; that He is therefore able to do that which the Apostle prays Him to do. Dear friends, it is a great thing to worship Jesus Christ, to believe He is true, Almighty God. A great thing for faith to be fixed in Him. If you can say, each poor, tried child of God for himself, and herself, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, what a favour that is, and how blessed you are. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha". "Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity". O what a favour to believe in Him and love Him. Then we have also "God, even our Father" in the text. Happy he who has God for his Father. Some of you have but you are not able to call Him Father yet, but the day will come when you will say - "Abba, Father". It is one of the greatest days in the life of a child of God when the Spirit of Adoption is given to him and he can say - "Abba, Father". And this God and Father has loved us with an everlasting, electing love, as I spoke this morning, and men hate the doctrine of election. Before they can get rid of it they must destroy the Bible, and then they wont be rid of the doctrine for it will live in every child of God. What a mercy to be chosen to eternal life. And this God hath given us everlasting

consolation and good hope through grace. And I ventured to say this morning what I will now repeat, that the consolation in its fountain is everlasting, though in its streams it is often very small; often not known, not felt, by the people to whom it is given, was given, in eternity. But there is a fountain - O, bless God - and may the Lord help me to sing well of that fountain.

The fountain of Christ, assist me to sing

And good hope; hope which is as an anchor to the soul and is cast into that which is within the veil. Hope and present enjoyment do not go together. What you hope for you have not got, but you will get it one day for "hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us". Grace is free, eternally manifesting itself in election, acting this way in choosing the people to whom it shall come and bringing knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins. Then the Apostle concludes with the particular petition and desire for this people, that the God of all grace, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, should comfort the hearts of these Christians, and stablish them in every good word and work. These things then, by the Lord's help, let us look at now.

First, "comfort your hearts". Comfort is a relative term. It relates to a precedent condition, a condition of mind, of conscience, of soul; a condition of trouble, misery, sorrow, weakness, fear, doubt, and in respect of all these things, says the Apostle, the Lord comfort your hearts. The first thing is this, that the Comforter is sent. Peter in his first sermon after the Day of Pentecost says of Christ that He is exalted at the right-hand of God and has received the promise of the Spirit which He has shed upon us as ye now see and hear. The Father is said to send Him. "I will pray the Father and He will send you another Comforter". The Son promises and sends Him. If I go away I will send you another Comforter. If I go not away the Comforter will not come, but if I go away I will send Him. The Father sends the Comforter in the Covenant, and the Son sends Him as the administrator of the Covenant after His resurrection and ascension into heaven, for all power is given unto Christ in heaven and in earth, and He has the seven Spirits of God; the Holy Ghost

Christ sends. Now this will bring the Trinity into our text, will it not? and I expect that some of you could say that you have loved the Holy Ghost, that His influence has warmed your hearts, His light has led your souls, His power has subdued some sins, His teaching has brought the doctrines of grace into your hearts. O what we do owe, some of us, to the Holy Spirit. He is the Comforter. He brings from heaven good news. He, in His office in the church, glorifies Christ. He, in the church, rules and is sent to rule and take care of the church; take care of individual members of the church. What a great office is the office of the Holy Ghost. Mind this; if you profess to have comfort, see whence it comes. What comfort it is, how it comes, what it does. It is not any sort of comfort. I believe that if some professors in trouble could get all that they want in this world, there is nothing in God that they would care for. But with a child of God it is very different. If he had the whole world and the Holy Ghost were not in him, he would not be satisfied, he could not be. He would say with Berridge

I seek and hope to find
A portion for my soul
To heal a feverish mind
And make a bankrupt whole
A cup of blessing for the poor
That's full and free and flowing o'er

And again with Berridge when he says

The portion of a beast
Will not content my heart
The God of spirits only can
Fill up the vast desires of man

O, blessed be God, some of us can say that. This then is the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and you know in the Scriptures how full, and wonderful, and gracious an office He fills in the church.

Now let us look at the comfort, the comfort that God sends by His Spirit into the hearts of His children. I said it is relative. Now I mean this. Suppose you go on for a few days without any prayer, no

spirit to pray; you keep the form up, you kneel down, you ejaculate perhaps as you move about, but you know there is no prayer. A deadness, coldness, hardness of indifference you find prevailing in your spirit. You begin to fear, you get alarmed. What a state I am in; where am I getting to? O Lord, do not let me live like this; have mercy upon me; and you are in bondage to prayerlessness. Then this Comforter comes - the word in the Scripture sometimes means, one coming alongside to help - this Comforter comes alongside you to help you and He breathes prayer into your heart. What a change you feel, what a difference. The form now has in it the life and power of the blessed Spirit. Your soul is animated with warm wishes, filled with earnest cries, led out in petitions; filled, your mouth with arguments. You do fill it with petitions and arguments which you draw from the Person and the death of Jesus Christ. Now that is comfort, is it not? real, solid, heavenly comfort, to be changed from the condition of prayerlessness to the condition of a praying soul. Once more the door is open. The door of grace, the door of hope, the door of mercy, open once more, and you go in and lay yourself and your case at the throne of God's heavenly grace. Once more you go out in full confession of sin, in fervent petitions. Once more you open your mouth wide, come with large petitions, confess your lost condition, your utter helplessness, and find that you have got the ear of God, if I may speak so. God, in His mercy, often comfort our hearts by this, because it is a comfort because of this; it brings us into an understanding, experimental understanding of the word in Jude - "Praying in the Holy Ghost". It brings us to that Scripture where Christ says - "Abide in Me" "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me." And faith looks at this, faith is led out now by the Holy Spirit to lay hold of Christ's death, to find life in it; Christ's intercession, to find access by it; Christ's blood, to look for pardon through it; Christ's righteousness, to expect justification in it; and Christ's mercy, whereby the heart melts. It is a great comfort to pray. If a person is naturally fond of sympathy and is in trouble, and has a real, a tried, patient friend to go to, to pour out that trouble into that friend's ear is a comfort, a natural comfort. Now how much more is it a comfort to the soul when the Holy Spirit opens the door and says to a sinner by His blessed, effectual teaching, go to the throne of grace, pour out all your wishes there.

Roll your burden on the Lord; make known your requests to Him; open your mouth wide, and that good God, to whom I direct you, will fill it. "Comfort your hearts", this way. It is good when we are enabled to take notice of the descent of the Holy Ghost into our hearts from time to time in new operations, fresh touches. Yes, you might walk over London Bridge when the crowds of people are going to business or returning from business to their homes, and you could scarcely make your way for the crowds, and yet all the while find your heart engaged in prayer. Another time you might go into your room, shut the door, kneel down -not a creature near you - and your heart would wander to the ends of the earth and you might say, well, what a vile wretch I am. No prayer in me, no love to God in me. Then you are miserable. Happy he who has life and grace enough to be miserable when he cannot get near God.

The second word I would mention to you in respect of "comfort your hearts", is this, that the gracious Spirit of Christ manifests Christ in some way suitable to your condition. Sometimes we are exercised by an unspeakable feeling of vileness. You know what I mean; when you feel you have done nothing amongst men but you feel so unutterably wicked, your nature so entirely depraved, and sin bubbles up in every thought, and wish of your mind, that you say, O what a vile creature I am. Then the devil says, you must not pray, must not think of approaching a holy God. And a legal heart - even though you may have been many years in the school of the Holy Spirit - a legal heart will tell you you are not a bit fit for prayer. Now the Holy Ghost will come down, and let your troubled heart and weeping eyes look on a bleeding Jesus, a suitable Saviour, the only way to the Father, the holiness of the vilest, the righteousness of the guiltiest, the life of the deadest, and what a sight it is. O it is lovely to look on Christ who is loveliness itself. It is wondrous to look on Christ when you are weary of yourself, and sick at every sight which you get of yourself. And this is comfort. "Comfort your hearts". You have this in the gospel of John where, promising the Holy Ghost, Christ says: "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". And the prophecy of Zechariah has it beautifully. The Holy Ghost speaking in that prophet said - "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall

look on Me whom they have pierced". Ah, a vile sinner is fitted for a holy Saviour. It is not easy to them to believe this, but it is so. The viler we feel, the welcomer is Jesus Christ, when the Spirit shows Him. Poor, dear creature, vile in your own eyes, this is the comfort you will receive - "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine" - of My Person, of My offices, of My work, of My salvation - "and shall show it unto you", and you shall see that it is more than your death, than your ruin, than your vileness, than all things that you can name as against yourself. Bless God for this comfort. It is a comfort; it inspires the soul that receives it with a new boldness. It is like the Lord coming and saying, look on Me, and He fixes your eye on Him, and O, you will never be able to express what you see in Him. And here you see the difference between trying to think about Christ as the Scripture speaks of Him, trying to think about His Person, and about His death, and about His righteousness; between that and the Spirit coming with Him; what a difference there is. The one leaves you cold; of it you get tired very soon. You say, there is no life in that. Of the other you say, this warms me, helps me, does me good; draws me out of myself, fixes my affections there, sets my hope there, and tells me that, wicked as I am, God will bring me through. "Behold O God our shield" - the faith of this afflicted one says - "and look upon the face of Thine anointed".

"Comfort your hearts" Sometimes - and I must leave some of you perhaps, though I would carry you with me if I could, but God only can do it - sometimes the comfort is this, that the blood of Christ is sprinkled on the conscience. O that is wonderful when you feel your iniquity forgiven, when the Lord brings no charge against you; when you put everything that is bad before Him, and He puts it all away and, as it were, will not look at it, but only looks on you, and blesses you with a sense of forgiveness. There was a woman once went to Him and with floods of tears washed His feet and wiped them with the hair of her head, and He told her that her sins were forgiven. What a happy woman. Have not you thought sometimes you would give a whole world, if you had it, to have the happiness that that woman had. All her sins forgiven, the 500 pence debtor forgiven, sin purged, and that Scripture made good - "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity". "Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven" O, what a mercy to be forgiven. Some of you may say, but that is what

we do not know. Well now, may I ask you a question? Are you satisfied not to know it? No, you say, the Lord knows my heart aches because I do not know it, and sometimes I sink more than I can ever express because I do not know it. I cry, I shout, I beg, I groan, I pray, I petition, but I have not got it yet. Well, Christ has unsearchable riches, and they will reach you one day, for He never said "Seek ye Me" in vain. Says Hart

Come ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you
Full of pity joined with power

What a mercy it is that there is a free gospel, and a gospel as full as it is free. This comforts sinners.

Sometimes the Spirit pours comfort in with respect to a promise. Given promises are often heavy trials. It was so with Joseph. He got a promise; he lost every sign of it for the time. He was sold into Egypt, so he could not have the sheaves doing obeisance to him, for he was removed from his brethren. "Until the time that His word came, the word of the Lord tried him." And if you have a promise unfulfilled that will be a trial to you. Sometimes the enemy will begin to trouble you about it. Sometimes your own heart will sink exceedingly respecting it. Sometimes providence may say, it is not likely you will get it. It was so with Abraham. O, how unlikely, naturally impossible it was that the promise of God should be fulfilled in him. "But", says the Lord by Peter, "beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day". It is sure to come. Why the Lord delays we may not know. You may say, why did God, who could have done the thing at once, let Israel be tried 430 years in Egypt. Why, it was not, as we should think, necessary for omnipotence to do that. That was God's way. He may send you to the ends of the earth before He will bring you into the fulfilment of a promise. But sometimes the faithfulness of God will be so manifested to you by the Spirit as that you will say, I will trust Him. I will venture on Him. I will leave myself, and the promise, and my hopes, and expectations, I will leave them all in His blessed hands. That is being comforted.

"Comfort your hearts". O, it is great to see omnipotence, to see infinite fullness, divine wisdom, all on the side of an expecting, waiting, troubled child of God. It is a great thing to believe in God, and to believe that "He is faithful who hath promised who also will do it." Whatever nature says, whatever the devil says, whatever unbelief says, faith will be in your hearts strengthened sometimes so that you say, He will do it. But I am nearly at an end of all. So was Paul, and so were the men with him, but he said - "Be of good cheer, I believe that it shall be even as it was told me". That is comfort then.

Sometimes His blessed Holy Spirit comforts in another way. He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart. That is very wonderful. Here is a poor heart like a stone, and locked up, and contracted, with no gracious feeling - and if you were to speak to the person with that heart, he might say to you, I have no expectation at all of getting anything - when suddenly there comes a divine sensation into his heart, and he may say with the Jews at the first, when they saw the manna, what is it? but he will soon know. Why, this is the love of God. This casts out tormenting fear, this dissolves my stony heart, this brings a heavenly warmth, this brings me near to God. This endears Him to me, makes Him great in me and great to me, and wonderful. This is the Lord's doing, this is His precious, eternal, electing love. And then the man says, why how could it be that the Lord did not take any notice of my sins? How could it be that the infinite God could pass by such sins as mine and come over them all, and enter my heart, like a stone, and shut up; as locked by sin, guilt, and temptation? "I am the Lord", He says; "I am the Lord" I do as I, a God, and I love as a God, and give as a God. "Comfort your hearts".

Sometimes He comforts the hearts of His children by a solemn assurance that He will never leave them nor forsake them, and when they get that they can look time, and difficulties, and tribulations, and all things in the face, and say,

Yes, I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given
More happy, but not more secure
The glorified spirits in heaven

Here is solid comfort. There are other things one might say about this comfort, but let what I have said suffice, because I want now just to look briefly at the next part of the petition.

"Stablish you in every good word and work". Some might say, well, if you have received the truth into your heart, if you believe in the doctrines of sovereign grace, if you receive the Word as being inspired, inerrant, what more can you have? Well, if a child of God were to talk like that, one would be disposed to say to him, there is something before you, and you might say to yourself, there is a fall before that person. Peter was very confident. He said, if all should deny Thee, I will not. I will go to prison with Thee, I will die with Thee. And so Peter got a fall to teach him something, to teach him his weakness, and that he could not stand without Christ. Have we received the form of sound words into our soul? If we have, then we have for an enemy, the devil, who walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We have also the heresies of our own nature that will contradict every divine truth. If we have, we have many difficulties in the way. "Stablish your heart in every good word"; every word of divine doctrine. Doctrine is very important. Have you received the doctrine of eternal, personal election, the doctrine of particular redemption, the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ; of sanctification by the holiness of Christ, of union with Christ which is eternal, and never to be broken? O, what a beauty you may have seen in these doctrines. I think sometimes I could say I have seen such a beauty, and lustre, and glory, and blessedness in these doctrines, that my tongue can never utter. But then you may get shaken, shaken to pieces in your feelings. What then? The Lord "stablish you", says Paul, "in every good word", that you may be nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. What would stablish you in the doctrine of God's eternal, personal election? Why, the sweet testimony of God that He has loved and chosen you before the world began. Made you a child of His. You, a piece of sin, you as wicked as the devil, you, ever prone to wander and leave Him. You, full of enmity, and blindness, and ignorance; loved you. Ah you may think and feel what others have thought and felt, that the greatest stretch of God's love would be in laying hold of you, embracing you. When you get a fresh view of it, and a new, sweet feeling of it, then you will be stablished, fixed,

settled here. If ever my poor soul is saved, you will say, electing love will save it. If ever I am kept from sinking into perdition, the arms of electing love must be underneath me. You will be stablished. So, with justification, that glorious doctrine. If this precious doctrine is to be precious to us, I will tell you one thing we shall feel. We shall feel sick, again and again, by the sight of our own filthy rags. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Then, when Christ who is our righteousness is manifested again and our little arms of faith open to receive and embrace Him, we are stablished. We say, O this is the robe, this is the righteousness, this is the acquittal that my soul wants. "Stablish you in every good word". And every word of promise that God has spoken we need to be stablished in. "Lord God" said Abraham "what wilt Thou give me seeing I go childless?" What is there for me? But the Lord took him on a night when the stars were visible in great numbers and told him to count them if he could. "So", said God to him "shall thy seed be". And Abraham believed God. And some night of temptation you may be in; some time of darkness, and fear, and doubt, and contradiction you may experience; and then the Lord may take you abroad, as it were, by faith, and let you see His power, and His goodness, and His light, and His glory, and His faithfulness, and say to you, I am your God. You say, Lord I believe it. You have got enough, you are stablished. You say that word will never be broken. My soul builds on it. My soul's heaviest hours now seem past, and I can look, and all is light. I believe in God. I believe in His faithfulness. "Stablish you in every good word". Stablish you in what He has said to you when you may be tempted to give it up, tempted to go away from it, tempted to think God did not do it, tempted to see another way, or to walk in another direction than that which was pointed out to you by the word which you got. O, says Paul, the Lord stablish your hearts in the good word, and give it not up. O, but there is nothing but darkness upon it. God is not darkness; you are, and the word may try you for a time, but He will do with His children what He did of old; He brought them forth with joy. He will bring His people - so long as He gives them power to hold fast, and cleave to Him - He will bring them forth with joy. "Stablish you in every good word and work".

What, are we to work? Yes; not for life, but from life. What a difference there is in that a man, working for life, is merely a dead

man. A sinner, working from life, walking in the fear of God, is quite another thing. There are many good works which the Lord's people are to do. For instance - "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, and gentleness". It is a great thing to be enabled to walk according to that calling of God in our souls. This means separation from the world. Philpot said once, if he were asked to describe true religion he would say it is separation, separation, separation. What is there in the world for us if we fear God? Nothing but death, confusion, and trouble. But O, we need to be stablished in this separation. We need to be stablished in the position that God has brought us into as separate people. "Walk worthy", said He. "Come out from among them". "What concord hath light with darkness?" Therefore have no fellowship with the unfruitfulness of darkness, but "come out from among them, and be ye separate and I will receive you", and walk among you, "and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty". (2 Corinthians 6) And this embraces all the good works that God will have His people walk in, for they are to be kindly affectioned one to another. They are to look on another's things, and not their own. They are to deny self. They are to forgive each other where any fault is, or any trespass has been committed against them. They are to walk according to the precepts of the holy gospel. These things are the good works God will have His children walk in. You say, but we cannot do it. Hart has a good word on this point, a word which was a great help to me many years ago. He says

All the works that thou must do
Will thy gracious Saviour
For thee work, and in thee too,
Of His special favour

And the Holy Ghost says, by the Apostle Paul, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Here is a poor creature who says, I know what Christ speaks is the truth - "Without Me ye can do nothing". I believe that is written on every gracious heart by the very finger of the living God. But then, says the Lord, I will give you a will. "My people shall be willing in the day of My power". Then He says, I will give you power to do it. As Paul expresses it - "It is

God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"
"Stablish your hearts in every good word and work". So may the Lord
fulfil His word in us, that we may be for His praise and glory.

AMEN.