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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 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"

The figment of Christ's early second coming had taken hold of the church at Thessalonica and some of them were looking for an almost immediate appearance of Christ, and the Apostle writes to correct this erroneous idea. It would seem as if someone had written in the name of the Apostle and so considerably moved and agitated the minds of these simple, gracious people, but the Apostle writes just to correct them and exhorts them not to be moved as by any spirit, any deceiving spirit, nor by any word that might be said, nor by any letter as from himself, or other Apostles respecting this matter. But before that great and notable day is to come there were certain events to take place, certain awful apostasy, a great falling away. There may be in some today some idea of the speedy appearance on earth of Christ. They will die disappointed I believe; it is a figment, this preaching of the second coming, the personal reign on the earth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is derogatory to His dignity, it is against the Scriptures, and the Lord's people are not to think of it, to look for it; it is altogether wrong. Some of the things which the Apostle said must intervene between the time of his writing this letter and the coming of Christ, some of these things have already happened. Before us is one, namely the great apostasy and falling away from the doctrine of the gospel, the setting up of the man of sin, the declaring of himself, God; being in the place of God. That has long since happened and is before us. The many antichrists that John speaks of are in the world; spiritualism and a variety of evils, in the professing world; the very general, alas for us, denial of the Eternal Deity of Christ, and the consequent denial of His vicarious atonement, we have in our midst, and the will of God that all men

should honour the Son even as they honour the Father is exceedingly, and widely disregarded.

Now the Apostle, having warned these people concerning this error, this grievous error, prays for them: "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 prayer is a mighty answer to Unitarians and Socinians. Christ here is God, and as such is prayed to, and He is to be first in the prayer. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself" bless you, "comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work". Let us first notice this, "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself." What is written concerning Him? This, that in Him, in the Man Christ Jesus all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells. God root that in us. May we really, firmly, humbly, gratefully believe and confess the Deity, the proper eternal Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take that away and what is your foundation? "If the foundation be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" He claims Deity. Whatever critics may say, we find in the Scripture that He does really claim to be God. If the Father is God, so is Christ. "I and My Father are One". The Apostle John says - "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one". The Son is in the Father, the Father is in the Son. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also". And it is clear, as I think, in that passage, that much more was intended than the mere sight of Him. Seeing Him to be what and who He really was, and is, is intended, and if you see Me, said He to Philip, if you see who I am, that I am in My Father, that I am one with My Father, and that My Father is in Me, then you have seen My Father. You cannot see Me and not see the Father. It is great to believe in the proper Deity of Jesus Christ. Arias was willing, it would appear, that there was a sort of Deity in Christ, but not proper. If he could worship a begotten God, could you? Could any child of God worship a begotten God, inferior to the Father? True worship is due to Christ because He is God, and the petition of the Apostle is here directed to Him. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself." Not by deputy, nor anybody, nor anything, but Himself in His Own Person, in His proper Person, and Deity, bless, and comfort, and stablish you in every good word and work. But if Eternal Deity

belongs to the Man Christ Jesus, that is to say, if the Eternal Son of God took up into union with Himself the body prepared for Him, why did He do this? What end had He in view? What was He to do? What should He accomplish? The Scripture, our only guide, informs us so abundantly in reply to the question. Paul in the Galatians tells us - "In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law". In that same Epistle he says - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." To the Corinthians the Apostle writes - "He hath made" - that is the Father - "He hath made Him" - that is the Son, "to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Again we are told - He "himself bare our sins in His Own body on the tree". "He hath made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself". He was the appointed High Priest who should serve in things pertaining to God. Iniquity was laid on Him, the iniquity of us all, and to put it away He must die, die a voluntary death. "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down of Myself, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father". So the infinitely important and everlasting word that Christ uttered on the cross, gives an answer to the question - why was He incarnate? - "It is finished". An end is made of sin, and an everlasting righteousness is brought in. The curse due to the church is done away, the hell of punishment is exhausted, and everlasting life now is to be made manifest as never before by a risen Christ, an exalted Christ. This is the Person here invoked by Paul - "Our Lord Jesus Christ" - who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; dead, buried, rose again the third day. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself ... comfort your hearts". He has in Himself everything necessary for comfort, and I would set before you some of the essentials of real comfort. The first essential is the blood of God with which the church was purchased. "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His Own blood". One who feels guilty can never be comforted with anything short of pardon. Think of it, whatever you feel of comfort in your heart, O guilty sinner, you feel through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. Every gracious touch of the Spirit, every sweet sensation of the love of God, every fresh hope of glory, every expectation of help from the Lord in your pilgrimage, you derive, though you may not always be conscious of it, from the

blood of the everlasting Covenant. It is essential to comfort, spiritual comfort. Without blood there is no remission. You can never get near God without the blood of the Covenant. It is essential to comfort that a Person should be a sufficient Saviour, that Jesus Christ should be able to save. If this is not so, no sensible sinner can ever feel comfort. If His arm were not strong enough, how could you have the comfort of hope of being sustained, of having your lot maintained, of being brought through honourably to your grave? If Christ were not God, how could you have the comfort of thinking even that one day Satan would be bruised under your feet? How could you think that the storms you are in, the rough sea you must traverse, the difficulties that you must meet with, that through all of these Christ would reign; over all of them prove Himself King. Sit on the waves as King, and control them. Bind the floods from overflowing and bring you to your desired haven. He must be a sufficient Saviour to afford real comfort. He is such a Saviour. No man can pluck My sheep out of My hand, said He. They are in My Father's hand, and no man can pluck them thence. "I and My Father are one", even though, as the Man Christ Jesus, My Father is greater than I, yet as to Deity, "I and My Father are one". "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself" bless you, and comfort you, because He is also the life of His people. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". "I am the life". "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son", all put there, as Paul says to the Colossians - "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell". You will never have any life to animate your souls, to elevate your affections, to lift you up to God, but that which Christ bestows. He has the fullness of it. He is that good and fat root that will communicate its living virtue and power to every branch united to Him. There is no consolation possible if eternal life be not given and if eternal life be given, it is given by Him who has it all. No comfort is possible without light - "Truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun". Who is the light? "I am come a light into the world". That is the light. You may have intellectual light in the Scriptures, you may approve of them in some ways, you may be able to read the original languages in which they were written; you may be in some way qualified by theological acquirements to speak of doctrine according to the energy and proportion of faith, but be quite ignorant of God. O

beware of thinking that intellectual approval of the Scripture is the same thing as seeing the light of life and walking in it. The things are distinct and very different. If you get true light into your soul, and have some acquired knowledge of the truth, you may be able to express the truth in a way that another - who gets the same light, and perhaps even more, in his soul, than you, but who is illiterate, - cannot express himself, but the light is the same, and it is called the light of life, because it is never simply a cold light. It never leaves the person in whom it is, cold and unimpressed. It is the light of the sun, the living light of the sun that gets into the earth, that reaches the root, that brings forth all the potentialities of the earth into fruit. This is the light of life that penetrates, that discovers darkness, that discovers light, that discovers God, that discovers the goodness of God. This is the light and it is this that comforts. Christ is qualified to comfort and He does comfort. It is essential to good, solid comfort, that Christ should be able to make promises, promises which should run, do run, to the end of our mortal race, and into eternity. If He were not God, could He do this? But He does make promises, He makes running promises, promises which are capable of multiple fulfilments, promises which you have not exhausted, never will exhaust. Promises, concerning which, when you come to the end of your mortality, you may be able to say - Not one word of all His good promise has failed. Then I say the promises you have had, and had fulfilment of, are not exhausted, and never will be. They come to Jordan, they carry you through Jordan. They come to the gates of heaven; they open those gates, they usher you in as one who had a blank cheque, so to speak, as one who had the blessed, the unfailing, the exhaustless promise of Jesus Christ. "Where I am there shall My servant also be." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." I go to prepare a mansion, and if I go and prepare a mansion, I will come again and receive you unto Myself. Now our Lord Jesus Christ comfort the living soul with sacred promises. It is essential to comfort, solid comfort, that this same Lord Jesus Christ should be able to fill His children with bliss, with glory, when they are with Him in heaven. And can He do it? Yes. We read in the Revelations of the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne; in the midst of the throne, being one with Him who is there also; and the seven Spirits of God which are before the

throne. But also He is in the midst of His host, His mighty multitude which no man can number, and He leads them to living fountains of waters, and they shall not thirst, neither shall the sun smite them any more, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes. May the Lord show you this blessed One, our Lord Jesus Christ. To you it will be a beautiful pronoun as you get to know Him in the revealing light of the Holy Spirit. Yea, you may personally change it and say, My Lord Jesus Christ. I possess Him. He, the glorious God, is mine. I - a sinful creature, redeemed by His blood, conquered by His grace, won by His mercy, bound to His cross by living faith; I, worthless though I am - am His. This is a wonderful thing then, and I do invite your attention to it, that when the Apostle says now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself comfort your heart, He is able to do it. The prayer was addressed to One who could do what was prayed for.

And secondly - "And God, even our Father". This is God the Father of whom we speak as the first Person in the Trinity. "The Father", as Paul speaks to the Ephesians "of our Lord Jesus Christ", and therefore of all His children. The blessed Fatherhood of God is here. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to His abundant mercy hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." The ultimate end of faith is this glorious God. Christ crucified is the end of faith for salvation, for peace of conscience, for a broken heart, for sanctification, for justification, and every good thing. God in Christ is the ultimate end of that faith, for through Christ you will get access to the Father as in the Ephesians we are taught. "For through Him" - that is Christ - "we both" - Jew and Gentile - "have access by One Spirit" - the Holy Ghost - "unto the Father". And this God is sufficient for all comfort. "God, even our Father". God, in some particulars, let us notice. The fountain of election. The fountain of election, first of all, of Christ, to whom the Father invites the attention of His people - "Behold, My Servant whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth" Christ was set up in the Council of Peace in eternity and it is in Him that all His children are chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God, so that is a great reason for all comfort when it is manifested by the Holy Spirit, that God, of His free mercy, God in His eternal purpose of kindness is the fountain of all comfort, and goodness, and peace. My

brethren, may the Holy Ghost make this manifest. "God, even our Father" so liberal in His gifts, gifts all included in one gift, that gift of His beloved Son. There is a beauty in that Scripture in John, which we shall never fully know in this world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You will never get through it. What a comfort this gift becomes, and God, the Giver of it, is glorified in every one who believes through the mighty grace of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Son of God. The Eternal Father giving His only begotten Son, and sending Him into the world, this God, comfort your hearts. God who made a Covenant. "I have made a Covenant with My chosen". This Covenant embraces the new creation. The first creation was marred very early and it repented God that He had made it, and it grieved Him at His heart. Were you ever grieved at your own ruin? Then God made a new Covenant and in that new Covenant is the new creation, of which He will never repent, for the saints are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2 v 10); "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him (Colossians 3 v 10); "created in righteousness and true holiness". (Ephesians 4 v 24). The first creation was not so. The second is glorious. "Rejoice in that which I create. I create Jerusalem a joy" This God, this Covenant God, comfort your hearts.

And then the Apostle speaks of Him thus - "God, even our Father, which hath loved us". And what that love is we are told in Jeremiah, where the Lord speaking in him says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love"; that that love is set on objects not worthy of it, not likely, naturally speaking, to attract it, but rather the other way. It is set out by Ezekiel where, speaking in him, the Lord said the church was as a child newly born cast out to the loathing of his person with none to do the necessary offices for it; dead. And then, says God to this one - "Thy time was a time of love", and I passed by thee when thou wast in thy blood, and I spread My skirt over thee, and I said unto thee 'Live', and thou becamest Mine. This was love. To the idolatrous Ephesians, some of whom may have wearied themselves, and made themselves hoarse with crying - "Great is Diana of the Ephesians", the Holy Ghost went and gave them a new heart and a right spirit. They did not want Him. Who does want God naturally? And there came a time to some of us. We did not want God, but He would have

us, and so there came that wondrous Spirit in His eternal love with the word of life and He implanted divine life in our souls. God who hath loved us. And I do not think I shall be violating any true doctrine of the Scripture, nor any proper interpretation of it, if I bring in that word of Paul concerning Christ and himself. Says he of Christ - "Who loved me and gave Himself for me". O, what an amazing thing for God to love a sinner, so to love a sinner as to give Himself for that sinner. "Who loved us". Loved us when in affliction, when in conviction, when in our blood, our guilt, our bondage, our distance, our darkness, our enmity, our ignorance, and quickened us. God who hath loved us. "God, even our Father". He is the Father of some here who have never yet been able to say "Abba Father". I know some of you would like to say that, and I wish you might soon say it, even now, if it should please the Lord to send the Spirit of Adoption into your hearts. But He is the Father of all His children. He is their Father when they are distant, and overcome, and troubled, and when they are trembling at His majesty and fearing His justice, and wrath, and hot displeasure; when they think that He shuts out their prayer as they cry to Him; when they have no comfort. He is their Father when the devil tempts and He permits the temptation very much to succeed for a time. He is their Father, when He sends a storm and a stormy wind blows. He is their Father when He forbears to send answers of peace to them as they cry. He is their Father when they think themselves to be reprobates.

"God, even our Father which hath loved us". Then "hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" "Everlasting consolation" we must first notice in its fountain because the streams are often cut off, but the fountain is always full. The fountain is God. The streams come by the gospel and the grace of the Spirit. The fountain is eternal love, eternal life, eternal redemption, the blood of the everlasting Covenant, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the fountain of all consolation here, the consolation of love, love known, love speaking, love caressing. Love is never satisfied really except as communicating itself to its object. If you are an object of anybody's love, you will know it sooner or later because love cannot be silent, it cannot be niggardly It must have a vent, it must reach its end. The husband's love terminates in his wife, it is not silent. It opens its



hand, opens its eyes, opens its mouth. It has a wonderful mobile face; it expresses itself in the look, as well as by the word. Now if you are the object of God's love it will speak, and you will know it. Speak to you, into your heart, in some way, in some measure, from time to time, and it will be consolation. As in the Philippians the Apostle speaks thus - "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love . . . ." (Philippians 2 v 1). Ask the church of old if there was consolation in love. She said, His love is better than wine. How did she know it? Why she had tasted it of course. He took her into the banqueting house and His spread banner over her - and she had eyes to see it - His banner over her was love. You will know what love means when you look, as in the banquet, at the banner. Its sweet motions will bring peace, and love into your own heart, and soul, and you will admire the love of God. You will sit beneath the shadow of Christ and find His fruit, His love, sweet to your taste. There is consolation in love. You are consoled in your sorrow, you are consoled against the fears of your heart, you are consoled with respect to your weakness - "When I am weak then I am strong". Consoled in respect of your inability to do good - "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me". Consoled with regard to temptation. "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" Consoled with regard to the end of your mortality. "So an abundant entrance shall be administered unto you". There is consolation in love, and God has given it, and the character of it is here - everlasting. Yes, my friends. You may feel it for five minutes and then say, it is gone, but it has not gone from the fountain. It is only a little stream that for a moment is diverted, stopped as to its flowing into your heart. Think of the fountain. Yea, and when the Holy Ghost opens your eyes and directs them to this great God and Saviour then you will say, I see where all my consolation is, and whence I must derive it in my soul.

Give us everlasting consolation by the atonement. The atonement fixes a sinner's heart, makes him say, as he feels the power of it - "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed". Toplady prayed to be bound close to the ignominious tree, and many have prayed the same prayer. We are daily sinning. We need daily forgiveness, and forgiveness can only come by the blood of Jesus Christ. "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not". These

truths are calculated to keep you; but if you sin - "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2 v 1) "and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1 v 7). It is solemn and it is sad beyond word to be daily sinning, but it is an everlasting consolation that God has given to His people in an abiding and ever flowing over, full fountain of forgiveness, a fountain for sin and uncleanness opened.

Everlasting consolation in the glorious gospel of Christ. The glorious gospel of Christ contains all that we need. For instance, hungry people can have no comfort by seeing food, but by partaking of it. Hungry people, spiritually hungry people, can have comfort, and do have comfort, by eating. "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" And what is that but what Christ says - "I am that Bread of Life". Therefore "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you". What consolation there is in the Word of God. It is as bread in a promise; in the gospel of Christ, there are promises yea and amen in Him to the glory of God by us. And faith does receive what is spoken. Says Christ - "Let not your heart be troubled". I go to heaven, I take possession of heaven for you, and as I do that the time shall come when I will fetch you home, for I must have you be with Me. The purchase of My blood, the sweet conquest of My grace, I must have with Me in heaven, and, as faith receives these things, there is bread, nourishing, strengthening. "Nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine."

"Hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" Good hope, do notice it. There is plenty of hope that is not good; plenty of hope that is no better than the writing and building of children on the sands, to be washed out by the next tide. Plenty of that; God save us from a false hope; give us a good hope. A good hope must have a good foundation. Christ is that. A good hope must have a good Author; the Spirit is that. A good hope must be fed by good things and the blood of Christ feeds it, and the love of Christ feeds it, and the Person of Christ feeds it, and the operations of the Spirit feed it. Good hope through grace, the unmerited favour of a gracious, great God.

Well, may the Holy Ghost direct our hearts into the love of God  
and into the patient waiting for Christ.

AMEN.