

SB
304
1363j
Lalsir

133
9/17/97

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 14 May 1933

ACTS 20 v 32

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God,
and to the word of His grace, which is able
to build you up, and to give you an
inheritance among all them which are sanctified"

The word of His grace, the gracious, blessed truths spoken by the eternal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, the fountain of grace. Grace was, in the covenant, poured into His lips; grace to save the vilest of the vile, to glorify God in saving the election of grace; grace to bring into vital union with Christ chosen sinners who, by the fall, were alienated from the life of God through ignorance and wicked works, and who said, in their nature, to God, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. Grace to strengthen the weak hands, to confirm the feeble knees and to say to them that are of a fearful heart, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance to your enemies; He will come and save you. Grace abounding over all the aboundings of sin, to cheer desponding hearts, to set before the longing eyes of quickened sinners the blessed grace, the divine and glorious Person, of the Lord Jesus. Grace to carry on the works of the new creation, making all things new. Grace that shines through the poverty, the voluntary poverty of Him who, though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich. This is the grace of God, Jesus Christ. He is the Word, the eternal Word, and this is, apparently, the true interpretation of this word, "The word of His grace"; the word that issues from Him, it comes from His blessed lips. The word which, in its everlasting fulness and sufficiency and power, He has to bestow and does bestow on His people. And it was to this blessed Lord Jesus Christ who has all grace, to whom the Apostle committed the Church at Ephesus, and in this blessed, inspired Book, continual in its inspiration and world wide - wherever chosen sinners are - in its application, so that, though spoken at Miletus by Paul, it is true today in Galeed to all to whom it shall come as being needed and sought. O, to be the subject of

grace, is to be an object of eternal love. To be a subject of grace is to be in the kingdom of Christ, to be in the household of God; to be built up for a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is to be a believer. And though, on account of the profession of religion in Christendom, it does not seem publicly very much to be a believer, it is a wonderful thing to everyone to whom faith is given that he, that she, should be a believer; a wonderful thing for any of us here to be blessed with faith, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is from the grace that the eternal Son of God, the eternal Word, has to convey, to give. This general view which I have set before you of grace is that to which the Holy Spirit guides, directs, and out of which He brings the grace that is needed. What a favour for us if we have a measure of grace, though the measure may be small. Let us look at what Jesus Christ is able to do.

"Able to build you up". This leads to the foundation; beware of this, look carefully at this. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ" To be built up you must be on the foundation. No house is built without a foundation. God will have a house; His people are to be built up a spiritual house, a holy temple, a habitation for God. The foundation is spoken of in the Scripture. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone," and this is the foundation the Spirit of God brings every child of God to and builds him on it. Peter speaks of this foundation and of the stones. He says: "To whom coming as unto a living stone ... ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." The living stone is the Lord Jesus; the lively stones are the saints, poor, needy, helpless creatures, who are laid and brought by the Holy Ghost to this foundation. Now the question will be with some of us whether we are built on this living stone, the Lord Jesus; whether we have been brought off from the old foundation, Adam; whether we have been drawn out of the pit; whether we have been slain by God to ourselves and all hope in ourselves and then brought and laid on this foundation, Jesus Christ. It is no easy thing for a man to be brought to Christ. It is no difficulty with God to bring him, but it is no easy thing for him to be brought, that is to say, men cleave to themselves, cleave to their own righteousnesses, and continue to so cleave until they are brought to where the Apostle Paul was brought to esteem his own righteousness, their own

righteousness, to be filthy rags. Then, when that felt ruin is in the heart and conscience, there is a willingness such as is prophesied and promised to the Lord Jesus: Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power. That is produced in every soul born again by the Holy Ghost. Now the word of God's grace comes in here: Ye are built up together; that is the people of God are brought together by the grace of Christ, and built up a spiritual house, a habitation for God through the Spirit. Built up. The building goes on gradually in the soul; the Holy Ghost brings sinners from time to time to this blessed foundation and builds them up on it. It is not done all at once. Young believers may look at older ones and envy them and fear that they shall never attain to what their aged friends have through grace attained to, but time goes on, and God now and again reduces a poor believer to ashes, to weakness, by giving him to understand and feel the corruptions of his nature, the weakness of his heart, the feebleness of his faith, and then puts him well down on Christ. These Ephesian christians were capable of an increase of grace; so are we. If we are christians we are capable of an increase, a growth, and it is this increase and growth that Paul had in view when he said to these good people, I commit you to God and to the word of Christ, His precious grace, which is able to build you up. This is done, I say, gradually more or less, and it should be no matter of discouragement to those of us who feel how little we know, to what a little have we attained, because of this gracious word. Christ's grace is able to build you up. It does not say Christ is grieved and displeased because you have so little, have attained to so little, and are so weak in yourselves. No; it says, however weak you are, He is strong; however much you may be tossed about, He is able to hold you up; however shifted you may be in your own spirit as to your own state and standing, He has grace to come to you and build you up. One day you may be built up by a sense of the precious love of God. One day you may feel built up a little by some distinct answer to prayer. Another day you may be built up by some application to you of some living word of the gospel. And so by degrees, graciously appointed and designed degrees, the grace of Christ builds the people of God up until they come, as the Apostle writes in the Ephesians, to the fulness of the stature of the body of Christ. They come to that word in the same Epistle, and the same chapter, not to be tossed about or moved by every wind of doctrine, and by the sleight and cunning of men, because

they become established in two things. They become established in their own ruin, their utter sinfulness; in the truth of Christ's word: "Without Me ye can do nothing", and that is a great preservative. So long as we feel our ignorance, our liability to fall, so long and so far, we are safe. Men may whisper error but you say, I am lost. Men may whisper something about doing good, and you say I have no power to do it. Men may say to you, you ought to be ashamed that you know no more and you say I am ashamed but there is only One can teach me what I know not. If you notice this in your experiences, you may by that be persuaded and preserved against the perverse things which men arising among us, arising in the church of God, may be speaking. And the other thing is this, that you are a blessed, and sometimes happy, child of God under a sense of His smile, and you are built up in humble confidence.

Can He have taught me to trust in His Name
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame

No, there is a building up of the soul in humble confidence which is different from the confidence of many which God will reject. I would say, do not hurry. God will hasten His work in His time. We may impatiently say to Him: It is time for Thee Lord to work, but He knows best. It is good to be as clay in the hands of the potter in this point. "Able to build you up" in your faith. You say sometimes perhaps, have I any faith, and you cannot answer the question to your own satisfaction. But if the Spirit gives you another view of Christ, you find faith instantly in exercise on Him, and that is a proof - you may well take it to be a proof - that you have faith. Faith in the bleeding Lamb, faith that is accompanied and works by love. And you will say sometimes on this point, I believe I love Him. I see in Him all that I need. I perceive in Him everything that is beautiful, lovely, desirable, and glorious. I see in Him a sufficiency for every need that I can possibly have. So faith is built up. Not all at once. You may come to be glad when you are tried, of Christ's chiding: "O thou of little faith wherefore didst thou doubt?" You may be glad of God's question in Deuteronomy to Moses: "How long will it be ere ye believe Me?" Questions which you say you cannot answer, but God, building your faith up, you will be enabled to understand that word which you would be afraid to utter sometimes, that you can laugh at

impossibilities and cry it shall be done. All things are possible to him that believeth. But on this point let me say, do not expect to believe and escape temptation. The devil tried Christ and Hart writing on that says

Say, could the tempter try
To shake a tree so sound, so green?
Good God, defend the dry

A believer is the only person who gets tempted about faith, and about God, about Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about sovereign grace. Men are tempted of their own lusts and turn away from God, but believers are tried on the ground of their faith, and about the object of their faith, but faith is built up. You cannot express much of what you feel when Christ is present to you and you can say I rest on Him; I rest my soul on His atoning blood; I rest on His righteousness for justification. I rest on His arm, and leaning on that I can come up out of the wilderness. I rest on His word and believe that He will fulfil it; that heaven and earth shall pass away but His word shall not pass away. Grace accomplishes this; you cannot say I have built up myself. You cannot say rightly, I sustain my faith. God must sustain it and every increase of it He must give. This honours Him; this humbles us.

"Able to build you up" in love. May the Lord keep us from that waxing cold, He speaks of, in the love of many. "Because iniquities abound the love of many shall wax cold" Do you feel jealous of this? Do you feel jealous when there is any decline, however small it may seem to be, any decline of love to Him. You may well be jealous of it, but if you be jealous of it, that will be good for you, for it will lead you to say, may Thy love be in my soul to draw out my love to Thee, to warm my heart to Thee, to kindle into a flame my poor love to Thee. Grace in various measures and in different manners of communication is able to build us up on Christ in love. Love to the Father the fountain of goodness, love to the Son the fountain of goodness, love to the Holy Ghost the fountain of goodness. Iniquity works very slyly. There is a subtlety in the serpent we may not at times think about. He came to a pure minded Eve who, till he came, had no suspicion of wrong; he came to her and by a subtle question

insinuated into her mind that God did not mean all that he said, a suspicion that, working, prepared her for his horrible statement, his lie, God knows you shall not surely die. Beware of subtle questions insinuated into your minds. You do not know what they mean. Fly to throne of grace by prayer, when any subtlety of this kind comes into your minds. But the Lord is able to build up or strengthen love, fix it on Christ the only Person worthy of it, fix it on Him so as that the world, your world, my world, shall seem but a trifle and but for a moment. Able to build you up.

Able to build you up in hope. "We are saved by hope". " Hope that is seen is not hope", and therefore hope is liable to much shaking because you have not got the thing in hand. And because perhaps there is no appearance of it coming, you are troubled, and think and fear it never will come. Hope is a grace for the future not the present. What you possess you cannot hope for; you have it. But what God has led you to hope for may be long delayed and therefore you will have trouble. Promises are not fulfilled all at once; a begun work is not completed in a day. The building of God is not hurried, and not completed in quite a short time. Hope is to do with the future. Future promises, or promises, the fulfilment of which is future. Now this precious grace of hope - hope for things not seen; hope for all that heaven has good; hope for an honourable passage; hope for an honourable end; hope for the fulfilment of every promise of God to you - this hope needs fortifying, strengthening, encouraging. Who is able to fortify it, to strengthen it? Who is able to enable you to say, I will wait on God? The Lord is my hope. Jesus Christ is; grace is poured into His lips that He may pour out of that grace into a needy soul, into a soul who feels its hope near dying out. So Paul's committing of this church unto Christ and the word of His grace was not a little thing.

Able to build you up. There are more dangers in us and about us than perhaps we are aware of. We do not know all the deceitfulness of our hearts in a day. It is mercifully more or less a gradual work of God the Spirit to open to our eyes something of that Scripture: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" When the Lord started with some of us we did know something of that heart, but O, compared with what we know today, how little did

we know then. Deceitful. A person so moral, with such a strong moral sense of truthfulness, that he would not utter knowingly a falsehood to anybody, that person, to have his eyes open to see hypocrisy deeply rooted in his heart, gives him many a shake. Ah, the unregenerate cannot understand this. Those of you present, who do not fear God, that are moral, - O, be thankful for morality - you may say, what does the preacher mean. My answer is this; I pray God to tell you what I mean; I cannot. He can make you know what He has made me know, and therefore poor honest men and women with grace in their hearts, pray hard sometimes for sincerity. This wicked, this deceitful heart, this desperately wicked heart; there is nothing too bad, nothing too wicked, nothing too abominable; no atheism too bold; no modernism too great; for us. We could do all; we could do all. I could, if God left me. Now what a mercy it is to be fortified by grace, and to be kept from self-confidence; to be kept from practising hypocrisy, from lying, from deceit, and to be made humble, honest in the sight of a holy God who hates lying, and every falsehood, and every false way He hates. You say, I am helpless; I know you are, but helplessness will never be an excuse. It will, as grace is given you, be a cause, a means of prayer. Lord make me honest; enable me to be honest to my own conscience and upright before Thee. He is able to do this. He is able in the next place to sanctify all afflictions to us, to make a blessing of them. Yes, so to bless them to us, as that we shall say: It is good that I have been afflicted. It was kind of God to chasten me. I went astray before He did that. I sinned in some ways before He checked me. Now I bless Him for chastening. Chastening sanctified gives occasions for prayer. Many visits to the throne of grace are paid that never would be if we had no trouble. Do not think you are hindered by trouble. You may again and again get very much disturbed by trouble, but eventually you will say I was not hindered in the race, I was helped in it by affliction. I was enabled to flee unto Christ to hide me, enabled to seek His power to sustain me, to seek His love to bring me to a willingness to be afflicted and so trouble is made very useful. We should bless God for trouble, we should thank Him for taking pains with us. Wise parents take great pains with wayward children and God, our wise and heavenly Father - though some of you would not like to call Him your Father this evening - He takes pains with His children. If they are very wayward, He makes a hedge of thorns about them and if

they are still more wayward He builds a wall of hewn stones around them. O, you wont have your own way my friends, if God loves you. But then, when He does that He comes with grace, sweet grace: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love"; therefore I deal thus and thus with you. "Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". Able to build you up by means of affliction sanctified. O, the grace of Christ in coming to His afflicted people. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted and the angel of His presence saved them." In His love and in His pity He comes to them and then they praise Him.

"Able to keep you from falling" "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling". What a word "Kept by the power of God through faith", kept from falling. You may have many a fall and no fellow creature see it. May we be thankful if we are kept from open sin, but O, the inward falls. Falling from prayer, from faith, from hope, from love, as to their exercise. Falling from stedfastness, falling from the truth as the truth is in Jesus. O do not think that because you have been brought up under the truth of the gospel you are kept safe from error. It is a solemn word that you have in the Epistle of John. The spirit of truth and the spirit of error. There may be a spirit of error while you talk about the truth. May the Lord keep His church here and the gracious people in the congregation from all error. From error of doctrine, from error in experience, from error of practice; keep the standard of truth, the banner, always flying, always set up. "He hath given us a banner that it may be displayed because of the truth". Able to keep us on a bed of affliction, to give us grace to say, the will of the Lord be done. Able to keep us from that monster sin, pride, that subtle beast pride; O it is subtle, unspeakably subtle. Grace, grace, grace, can make and keep us humble; little in our own eyes. When you read of the Apostle Paul's conversion, of the revelation he had, of being carried up to the third heaven to see and to hear what he never could describe, to read his epistles so wonderful, you may wonder that he could say, less than the least of all saints. You reckon up that in terms of grammar - less than the least - and the mighty, the blessed, holy Apostle Paul said that he himself was less than the least saint. Humility is a blessing. When we are truly humble by the Holy Spirit working in us, we do not feel fit for anything but to lie at the footstool of mercy. Able to give us a good finish. Do you pray for that? Do you ask that you may not so

live as to provide thorns for your dying pillows, that you may be so blessed with grace on your dying bed that you may sing the victories of it, and praise Him who shed His blood and thus gained an everlasting victory for you and victories over enemies, victories over fears and all kinds of evils. And able to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. The good land, the land of promise, was divided among the twelve tribes by lot. One day this lot, another that. This portion was for Joseph and that portion for Judah and so on. God has fixed our places, fixed our inheritance, and the Apostle in the chapter which I read said of the saints - In whom ye have obtained an inheritance. Children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Not a simple donation that might be given without any relationship, but an inheritance through relationship. Children inherit from their fathers; the children of God inherit from their heavenly Father, and their dear Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a gift, but it is a gift given by divine relationship. God is the Father of His people. Jesus Christ in the gospel of Matthew tells His disciples not to be over anxious about this world and the provision necessary for them, for, says He, your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. That does not mean mere knowledge; it means a knowledge that will move Him to send supplies. He knows what you need; He has the supply. He has put it into the hand of His Son; He has written it in the covenant. It is written in the Scripture: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." What a pledge. O, what a sweet pledge, that the Lord, the Holy Ghost, moved and inspired the Apostle to make on God's behalf. "My God shall supply all your need according" - not to that need which is little comparatively, though not little to you - according to what He possesses; gold, silver, cattle on a thousand hills, men's hearts, all His. "According to His riches in glory". More than the possession of the world, even grace, goodness, wisdom, power; according to all these riches shall be the supply. What a fulness; poor leaky vessels cannot hold much, but what a mercy that God gives out of His fulness into these vessels. Able to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. There will be a wonderful company in heaven. Think of it, Adam, Eve, the fathers and the prophets and all the holy saints of the most High, all in the gospel churches, who are born again, adopted into God's family, all

these; and what a song, what harps of gold. An inheritance among all them that are sanctified, that are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, in the light of divine glory; made meet by the sanctifying blood and grace of the Lord Jesus. Well dear friends, this is the fountain. I have tried to direct you to it. May the Lord who alone can do it effectually, do it; turn your eyes and hearts, faith, hope and love to Himself, that you may not be discouraged by your little experience, nor by your sinfulness, nor by any temptation, but hold to this: God is able; nothing too hard for Him.

AMEN.