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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel

Brighton on Wednesday evening 21 November 1928

Text: John 11 verse 15

"Nevertheless let us go unto him"

The whole verse is - "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to the intent that ye may believe, nevertheless let us go unto him"

It struck me yesterday, in thinking about the service here this evening, that the few observations on this last clause, with which I closed the last service, were not sufficient, and that, if one were helped a little to enlarge on this clause, it might be useful to us.

The whole verse is very wonderful. I spoke about it on Lord's Day evening. A family of three, loved of God, His permission of the solemn circumstance of the brother's affliction and death, His remaining away, though only about two miles from them, for two days after the news of his affliction reached Him. Very striking, full of purpose. Nothing is done by God, nothing is permitted by Him, without an end. A great purpose was in His mind when delaying to come to the afflicted family, when allowing the brother to die, and the purpose was not confined to the family. It extended to the believers, to the disciples who were with Him. It extends to this day and it may in an especial manner extend to some belonging to us who are now afflicted. A very instructive word it may be to some. "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there", to forbid the death, to prevent the trial. I am glad I was not there because what I am to do shall be for this great end - that you may more fully, more firmly believe. You believe now, you shall still more believe. You believe now, you shall more fully, more firmly believe by what I am to do now. An affliction is not an end in itself. If we could but believe this sometimes, what a comfort it would be. An affliction that may be on you, or me, on us as a people, is not an end in itself, is not a dispensation, a full dispensation in

itself. There is something to grow out of it, some purpose to be accomplished by it, some mercy to flow, some teaching to be impressed on the heart by the affliction. Wait on God. Wait on God. You will never wait in vain, you cannot, because to all His waiting people He says "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me". When you wait on yourself, shame attends that. When you wait on a creature, confusion attends that. The shadow of all Egyptian trust is a confusion to those who trust in it, but waiting on God is good and never in vain. Having told His disciples that His friend Lazarus was dead, now He says "Nevertheless let us go unto him" What a strange thing! Go to a dead man, go to a corrupting corpse, go where there is no hope. What a strange thing! God's ways are strange to reason. They are strange to natural feelings, strange to appearances. Let us go to a dead man. Let us go to a foul grave. My friends, if you have got a death, if you have got a corpse, if you have got corruption of some sort or kind, and the Lord Jesus says - I will go to them, you will find this, that His glory in you, His kingdom in you, His mercy toward you, shall be magnified. "Nevertheless" that is to say, though the case is what it is, though beyond all human hope, though death and corruption are now prevailing and though it would be dangerous to a mere man to go to that grave and open it, "Let us go". O what a word! But let us see who it is that uses this strange language. Who is it? The mighty God. The mighty God, to whom death is but a servant. He speaks. So the approach of Christ is the approach of the Majesty of heaven, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not neither is weary. Ah, if He should say of any here - Let us go to them - as He approaches this will be true, there will be the approach of infinite majesty. What a mercy, and what a wonder, the Majesty of heaven in the man Christ Jesus who is Almighty God, coming to a grave. Look at the case, a bad case. Have you got a case? Is it so that at times you can do no more, if you can do that even, than seek the face of God and say - "Lord here is a corpse, here is a soul that feels dead, dead feelings, dead prayers, a corrupt nature, a blind understanding, a perverse will, lack of true affection. Here is a case Lord" Do you understand it? Prayer deals with many things, and among them, with the wickedness and the death of human nature. But in

dealing with this sad thing, prayer also deals with a living God. Prayer is a wonderful thing in the sinner. It is the sinner's dealing with God, coming to God, honestly, humbly, tremblingly, coming to God. Well, it is a grand thing, a mysterious thing for a man, a woman, a poor afflicted soul, coming to God, coming honestly, humbly, tremblingly. "Lord here is a bad case, I have no religion, I have but little, if any faith, I feel very graceless. I am very ignorant. I am very rebellious at times, sometimes as hard as a stone, as cold as ice, not exercised as I would and should be. O look on me". Now when these two meet, this wicked case and this mighty God, there is something going to be done. I do hope I feel thankful for such a gospel as the scripture reveals, Not for good people, The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, that believeth in his own wickedness and ruin and that believeth in a mighty Saviour. And let me make this remark here, that it is very wonderful that our death is not so offensive to the majesty of heaven as to keep Him away. What offends us is infinitely offensive to Him, but not sufficient to drown His love, to kill His love or to damp the ardour of His determination to approach and save a sinner. For love's sake He comes. For the covenant's sake He comes. For His own glory He comes and for the salvation of this corrupt, putrid thing, a sinner, He comes. May He come to you. May He come to me again and again. O sinner, you will never fully enter into the infinite wisdom and love and goodness of God coming to sinners. We cannot measure it. We cannot weigh it. We could not contain it all, only an infinitesimal, if I may use such a word, quantity of it. It is so wonderful. "Let us go to Him," bad as he is, let us go. Dead as he is, let us go. Corrupt as he is, let us go to him. Grace, sovereign grace o'er sin abounding. We have here the speaker of it. Ah, and says a poor sinner "It is not for me," and the devil wants you to put it away from you. The devil wants you to turn a deaf ear to it. He wants to dishonour God, and he aims at dishonouring Him. He wants to lessen His love, at least to hinder you from believing it. He wants to reduce to impotence the omnipotence of Christ, or make you believe it cannot deal with you, cannot save you. O, believe him not. Remember that he is a liar from the beginning and a murderer and so here "Let us go to him". If Lazarus had

been alive, no matter how diseased, we might have said, "Well He has gone to heal an afflicted but a living man" but here is a dead man, and this would show to us that there is nothing too hard for Him, nothing. Come then poor sinner, approach with humble faith, and beg of this great God to come to you. Majesty, O who can understand the stoop of this great One. Holy, infinitely holy, yet coming to a corrupt sinner. May the Lord come, that we may bow before His Holy Majesty and have courage even with all the death we feel to invite Him. Can you invite Him? Martha and Mary had their limitations. Their faith did not go very very far. It just went as far as this "Lord if Thou hadst been here our brother had not died". And sometimes you may be like that "Lord if this had not happend, matters would have been right." "If this trouble had not come matters would have been different." O, our limiting of God. There is more in that scripture than I have ever fully understood. "They limited the Holy One of Israel". The cause of their limitation was their unbelief. Their trouble was even more than God, that was the thing, but Oh no, He wont have it. May the Lord grant that we may not have it.

"Let us go unto him". Let us go in My omnipotence. Yes, my friends, an omnipotent One comes, and what is death to Him? Think what He did when, out of nothing, He made the worlds, what He does when He sustains them by the word of His power, and He it is who speaks in the text "Let us go unto him" Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" Is our unexercised state too much for Him? Is our distance too much for Him? Is our wickedness too much for Him? Is our ignorance too much for Him? Nothing is too hard for Him. "Let us go unto him". "Let us go". " I am going to My friend, I am going to My friend Lazarus." O may He say "I am going to My friend in Galeed, distant, dark, dead in feeling, I am going to him". Omnipotent love, omnipotent grace, omnipotent pity shall flow from the mighty God of Jacob, Just think of it. The omnipotent God says "'Let us go to that grave". O grave, I will be thy destruction, O death I will plague thee, and He plagued the grave and destroyed death when He said "Lazarus come forth" He needs but to speak the word, and it is done. Think of it. Martha said "by this time he stinketh". Lazarus must have been

as pure, as free from disease and corruption in his body as he was when he was born and in his healthiest days when he came forth out of the grave. The work of Christ has no corruption in it. It deals with corruption. The blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin and the grace of Christ can remove all corruption and make you, a poor wretch, acceptable to God. In your prayers, and in your belief, and in your hope and in your love, make you acceptable to God. "Let us go to him". Omnipotent to save, He is. "Let us go" Is not it love? I say, is not it love that made the blessed omnipotent One say "Now My friend shall live." Nature said "It cannot be", but said the Lord "I will do it" "O", but one says "there is no hope of that for me". I dare say if you had spoken to Jacob, that is Israel in that day; he would have said, "It is quite true, there is no hope" Jacob said "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgement is passed over from my God" What saith the Lord to thee? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, hath it not been told thee, that God, the everlasting God, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding, and though the youths shall faint and be weary, and though the young men shall utterly fall, yet .... What? Why, the Lord will increase might to them that have no power. He will increase it, that is, He will give it again. He came to this man. Disease killed him, but sovereign power shall raise him again. O sinner, what a case you may have! But it is not too much for the Lord. It cannot be. Who is it that speaks here? Why, it is that great one of whom it is said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" of whose peace and government there shall be no end. Look then at this great matter. Here says the Lord, the Ruler, the Sovereign Ruler "Let us go unto him". My friends, there is no need, I think I can say this rightly and with a little understanding, there is no need that you should be better in self in order to your being right. All the need is in yourself, but no need to get better. All you require is the coming of Christ to you. That is all I need, nothing else. But this is a great maul on the head of a legal person, a great maul on the head of pride, that we must just be as dead things and corrupt for Christ to come to us. He delights in mercy. He

delights in mercy. O but you may object that this is a case beyond mercy, it is death, but mercy will speak life, mercy can do it. It is all here.

Now one more word, a God of love speaks this. He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Love spoke this word "Let us go unto him" Yes, but reason may say "If He loved Lazarus why did He let him die?" "If He loved the sisters, why did not He prevent the sorrow, the bereavement entering that peaceful home?" "Why did not He do it?" What right has reason to question God? He giveth not account of any of His matters. What right have men who deserve hell to question God, why He should let a little trouble come to them? There is no right in us my friends, that is, there is no claim in us. But He says "I, the God of love am going to this trouble, I am going to this trouble and I will show My wisdom, and My grace, by making this trouble turn to good. The family shall see it and feel it and My friends about Me shall see it and acknowledge it. Good shall come out of it. O the love of God, what will it not accomplish when His people's cases are concerned! Talk of omnipotence, O, what cannot it do? And love is always in its work in the church. God is love, and so when desolation was about Israel He said "At this time, at this time I shall speak" - "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" May the Lord prevent our wicked hearts from replying against Him. May He prevent our vile nature from rising up in rebellion against what He does and what He permits. Good is to come out of it to every saint whatever the trouble may be. One may say "I do not see how it can be" No, but God knows, God knows. Our ignorance will never prevent His work. We may not see how a thing can be but He knows how to do it. "He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation". O afflicted friends, the God of love never willingly wounds. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" and when He does so then He has a two-fold reason. The first is to correct His son, to chastise as a wise father chastises. The second thing is to bring glory to His name, glory to His name in the deliverance which He will work, in the revival He will grant, in fresh discoveries of Himself in His mighty moving, in His loving moving. O if we could only give Him

credit. How little we believe in Him! How little we believe His love, the God of love. He is of infinite patience to bear with the limitation we put to His love and to His wisdom and to His power. Let a God of love say "I am going to him" and the end must be good. It must be good. Is there anything that this God of love wont do for the good and the instruction and the establishment and the encouragement and the comfort of His own people? That is a great word in the Romans "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" But then I did not quote the first words "And we know". "And we know that all things work together for good" "Know"? You look into your hearts and say "how can I believe that with this trouble?" You look into your circumstances and say "How can it be true seeing that all it does is to provoke my temper and bring the worst out of my nature?" What saith the scripture? "We count them happy which endure". "Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" What was the end of the Lord there? What was the end of the Lord with Job? It was ending his affliction, the turning of his captivity, and giving him back again his wealth or more than he ever had before his trouble came. That was the end of the Lord. In that case we have seen the end of the Lord. You have not seen His end yet in your trouble. It continues. The corruptions continue, the death remains, you have got to see it. "We count them happy which endure", happy in their state and when they can believe in God they are happy in their feelings, though their trouble remains.

What a mercy it is that not only cannot our corruption keep Him away but our unbelief cannot. I saw a little into the horrible nature of unbelief the other day in that word of God's to Moses with respect to his murmuring people - "How long will it be ere ye believe Me?" How long will it be ere some of us believe Him? When deliverance comes, we rejoice. When fresh troubles arise then we murmur. "How long will it be ere ye believe Me?" All that I have done, all that I am doing, all that I will do shall, in the end, rebuke your unbelief, and magnify My goodness. "Let us go with the gospel to him". The gospel is a

cure my friends, the gospel is God's plaster of figs for a sore boil. The gospel is the prophet's body to cover the dead lad. O what the gospel does! None can say, but those who know it to be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. The gospel comes in the power of the Holy Spirit and gives liberty to the captive, opens the prison to them that are bound. Yea, the gospel of Jesus Christ gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

Now I would that the Lord would help us, as a little congregation, to look at this. Jesus is the fulness of the gospel, the sum and substance of the glory of the gospel. His Father sent Him to be His salvation to the ends of the earth. He sent Him to bless sinners, to preach glad tidings unto the broken-hearted. And so, whatever the case is, this word shall be made good. "Let us go unto him". "Nevertheless, let us go unto him." Dear friends, Christ cannot be happy with you always at a distance. He cannot be complete without His members. Think of it! So He says "These are Mine". "These are Mine, but they are dead, they are buried, let us go unto them"

And, in the next place, it was just this - the life going to death. It is that. The life goes to death. Still it is so. Therefore, He says, "I make all things new". Old promises that have been forgotten are again filled with life, old experiences that have been out of your mind and sight for a long time perhaps, are again renewed by a fresh experience. That spirit of worship and of love, long since perhaps as dead, is revived and you are renewed. The days of youth are renewed, because the life comes. Let this life but come, O what a change instantly is made. So God is magnified, and sinners are blessed, in that He is being magnified, because He does them good; brings saving health; the saving health of the gospel, He brings to their diseased souls and peace He gives to their troubled consciences and love He gives to their dead affections, so that again they are restored and return to the days of their youth. "Ah" one says "but I want it, I have not got it" Well, if your want be a

spiritual one, if you have got a real prayer in your heart, if God's dealings with you are making a place for Him in you, will He stay way? Does He give hunger, that the man to whom He gives it, shall starve for want of bread? He is a good God. He is a good God. May we believe Him.

To trust Him endeavour  
The work is His own  
He makes the believer  
And gives him his crown

Now one more remark. This dead man Lazarus lives and there is a feast made. Christ and a living Lazarus feast at the same table. What may we say to this? Why, that sinners who are distant from Him, dead in their present experience, corrupt in their feelings, very, very unlikely ever to come to be right in their judgement, that such sinners have before them a feast of love. Their living souls have before them a time when they will again sit at table with their Lord and eat celestial food, when He will say to them "take eat". "Eat My friends, drink My beloved". What a prospect. What a prospect. Some may be saying - "We thought once that we were favoured to sit at table with Him. We once thought that we belonged to Him, that we were His. We once felt that there was no distance of guilt between the Lord and us, but now it is so different. All the purity, all the warm love, all the simplicity, all the humble confidence that we felt have gone, and in their place we have nothing but sin and gloom, and fear and doubt and bondage and conscience accuses, conscience accuses and we have to say He is right, He in His absence is right. We have sinned Him away." Is that so with anyone? Now listen to what He says. "I will go and return to My own place till they acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they will seek Me early" And what is that to be followed by? Why, "O Israel return unto the Lord" What causes that? His love, His approach and the day may come when you will say, sweetly surprised at what you say even, but say it out of a feeling heart "The voice of my Beloved, behold He cometh, skipping o'er the hills, leaping o'er the mountains" This Beloved, He says "Let us go to that mourner, let us go to that sinner in whom is such a

sad change. Let us go. O let us undo the work of sin. Let us undo the work of the devil. One may say "I cannot believe it" May you be enabled to wait on Him. Look at this word. Death, a sealed grave, a corrupting foul body, inviting the Lord as it were and He says "I will go to him".

One end, in addition to what I have said, is this. I did name it at the beginning. One end is that faith may be established, strengthened, that we may say, again and again, because the Lord has come, because He has heard cries, because He has passed by iniquity and forgiven sin, again and again and performed His promise, therefore will we call upon Him as long as we live. Now may the Lord add His own blessing to the observations made if it please Him and the glory shall be His.

Amen.