

SB/JH23

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, by
Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
16th February 1930

Text Psalm 17 verse 5

"Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

In speaking of this scripture, this morning, you will remember, that after some remarks on the preceding verses, I said, that we would look at the paths of the Lord, in two ways. First these paths, which He Himself has laid, cast up for His people, paths which no creature touched, God only made them. The paths that lead to Himself, and therefore were cast up by Himself, the person of Christ, who is the way. (John 14 verse 6). The death of Christ, the just for the unjust. The blood of Christ, by which we are justified and cleansed. And on these heads, one made some remarks and then came to the second point in respect of the paths of the Lord, and made only one remark, on the Spirit of burning, and the Spirit of judgement. God's dealings with His people, His ways towards them. He does deal with them in particular ways, and this is one of them, He comes to them as a Spirit of burning and of judgement, and that does not leave them much, when He comes, to burn up their rubbish, wood, hay and stubble, there is not much left. I ventured to say, this morning, it sometimes left people who are the subjects of it, to wonder if they had got any religion.

It is so discovering, so penetrating, so consuming, of wood, hay and stubble, that the subjects of it, have nothing to glory in, but if you are one of the subjects of it, take notice. Let me repeat what I said this morning, this work is not to drive you away from God, it is not intended for that, neither is it intended to drive us to despair, but to clear away our rubbish. To open our eyes to what is right, what is of the flesh, and what is of the Spirit. A little is a great mercy, if it be real. Do not be looking for great quantities, and do not be looking for a great increase. Rather be seeking reality, the gift of the graces of the Spirit. If the Lord's ways with us, are to save us, depend upon it we shall enter the spirit of that word, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Corinthians 15 verse 50). Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, this is very solemn, and very painful for those, who are brought into the experience of it, but very blessed in the issue. And the next thing I would say, is this, that God in His wise, holy, imperative providence, has wise paths, which are sometimes, to us, very solemn and strange.

His way is in the sea, for as we read, "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known."(Psalm 77 verse 19). "He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds."(Psalm 18 verse 11). These things are very strange, when God will bring a person to Himself again, and again, He walks toward him in those strange ways. Decrees a consumption on something that we would like to preserve and find flourishing. By His providences, He calls His poor people to their senses, from time to time. He won't let us depart very far from Him, He will again and again, put our feet into the stocks of chastisement. O my friends, it is a wonderful thing, for God to take any path toward us, and walk in any providence towards us, and we shall not always see them. He teaches by strange things, He takes advantage of a loss of memory, in some things.

He fed thousands from a few loaves and fishes, then the disciples following this, forgot to take bread with them, and He began to teach them, to beware of the leaven of the scribes and pharisees, due to their loss of memory and forgetfulness. He may take advantage, of some strange thing that you do, or something that you forget, in order to teach you lessons which are necessary for you. These are some of His paths; sometimes He lays a heavy hand on one whom He loves. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:"(Revelation 3 verse 19). When men are wise they believe that, and perceive that it is, His love that causes the trouble. He searches them by troubles, reproves them by troubles, searches them again and again, by some strange providence. His paths are strange and difficult, it is difficult to walk wisely in the providence of God, and make good use of trouble, and to follow Him when you are afflicted, to press your case, when He seems to repel your advances. It is difficult to go after Him, when it seems, that all your movements toward Him, just cause Him to allude you, and not let you see Him. Those are some of His ways. "His way is in the sea," O that we could remember it, "His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known"(Psalm 77 verse 9). He giveth no account of any of His matters, and says, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." (John 13 verse 7).

These are some of His ways, and solemn ways they are. You may be in some of those ways, one is, a path of tribulation. This is a serious thing, necessary but serious, we see tribulation in some of our fields, the threshing machine is a type of tribulation. The old Roman instrument for threshing, was called a tribulatum. Where God sees a quantity of chaff, where there is very little wheat. He says this chaff must be driven away, and so He sends tribulation to separate the chaff from the wheat.

In our foolishness, we are apt to think more of the chaff, than of the wheat. He thinks more of the wheat, than of the chaff. So He has a floor, and the wheat is spread on it, and the flail is used to beat the wheat. The heavy flail, which some of us, who are older, will remember seeing used, separates the chaff from the wheat. This is tribulation, faint not, O faint not, saint of God, if you are now under the flail. If you are in the threshing machine, that is suffering tribulation. It may come to the person, it may come to the family, it may come to the business, it may come in different ways, but tribulation is tribulation, and all who are under it, know it. You who are Mine, whom I will have with Me, whose countenance is comely, whose voice is sweet, tribulation will bring that countenance open to My throne, and shall cause that voice to be heard.

Now let us look, in the next place, at the prayer. "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Hold up my goings in Thy paths, in these paths, which Thou alone has set up, or cast up. The going of faith in the Lord Jesus, the way to heaven, the way, before heaven is reached, to justification, to sanctification, to wisdom, and to redemption. There are difficulties, there are enemies, there is weakness, and so these things, make the cry necessary, "Hold up my goings".

A legal heart will interfere, with the steps of faith, a proud spirit will oppose the moving of faith, and so there is sometimes, a stumbling. Lord hold me up in believing, the name of Christ is declared, that we may believe in Him, and with that believing, we may know we have eternal life. There is no one in heaven, or on earth, who is so hated and persecuted, by men and devils, as Jesus Christ, and if you have got hold of Him by faith, the faith of God's operation, you will have opposition, to that hold. Sin and devils, and false doctrines will seek to lessen that hold, and as you feel that working, then the cry will go out of your heart, by the Spirit, Lord do keep me a believer, it is not so easy to believe, as most men think. Keep me a believer, if Thou hast made me one, keep me cleaving to Christ, in the nakedness of my soul, in the ruin of my sin, in the darkness of my understanding, keep me a believer. O it is difficult, I know it is difficult to venture all on Christ, when you have no religion. I believe I have named to you before, what a dear godly friend of mine, said on his dying bed, I am going to heaven, he said, without a scrap of what the world calls religion. Not easy. Hold me up Lord, make me a believer. Of all the struggles I have had, during my long life, none have been so severe, as this, to cleave to Christ in the face of guilt, death, hardness, ingratitude, pride, envy, and every evil thing, that can come, and spring up out of a wicked heart, yet to believe, in the face of all that, to believe in the face of reason, or of feeling the devil opposing you.

To believe in Christ, to the saving of your soul, to believe in His wisdom to guide you, as you feel you are a fool, to believe in His power to help you through, notwithstanding the fact that you are constantly knowing your weakness. This is faith, Lord hold us up in it. "Hold up my goings in Thy paths".

Do you sometimes say, Lord I am in earnest, I want to go to heaven, I want to be justified, I want to belong to Thyself. I want to be separated from all evil, which is in me. Ah, then the enemy will come and oppose you, and there is an enemy in the citadel, who will seek to open the gates, to the external enemy, then you will need this "Hold Thou me up, that we may learn the importance and greatness of that scripture, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."(21 Corinthians 2 verse 5). A very solemn scripture, beating down, grinding into dust all human wisdom in respect of salvation. And giving this power, and this only, to a naked sinner, hanging on the Lord Jesus Christ, in the face of all opposition. You need to be held up in this, when providence is adverse, when the hand of the Lord seems against you, when He appears to take no notice of you, "when I (you) cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer." (Lamentations 3 verse 8) (and your prayers seem shut out), when the Comforter, who should relieve your soul is far from you. Then to believe, when the ship is being broken up, when inevitable ship-wreck is before you, then to believe. It is no easy thing.

When a young Christian gets liberty at first, O how good it is to him. Now he is going to heaven, all things are straight now. God is his God, peace is in his conscience, he is going to heaven. Yes, and perhaps for days, weeks or months, some walk in that holy confidence, neither sin nor devil, nor any dog being permitted to move their tongues against him. And this strong mountain, will remain in this Christian's view of things, till God hides His face. Some of us will never forget that time, I shall never forget it. The little time it lasted was wonderful, but when an awful discovery was made to, and by me, O the shock, the weakening, when I discovered that sin, not only was in me, but that I loved it. Hold thou me up, keep me believing, keep me a believer in the face of all things that come.

Dear friends, you who have faith, you who need to pray this prayer, "Hold up my goings in thy paths" keep me in this path, the path of justifying righteousness, the path of believing in the Saviours Person, the path of looking to His priestly office, offering and intercession, no other thing will do, no other standing will bear you. Next keep me in the ordained path of prayer, hold up my goings in that path, which Thou hast ordained. Hart speaks the truth when he says:

Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings, God designs to give.
Long as they live should Christians pray;
For only while they pray they live. (Gadsby's 882 verse 1)

Oh, but the opposition to it, is very painful to discover that there is in our nature, a spirit that is mightily opposed to prayer, it (prayer) is the exact opposite of independence, and independence is a mighty devil in us. One must use strong language sometimes, I have suffered so much from prayerlessness, and from aversion to prayer, that I am obliged to speak of it strongly. You would rather do anything than pray naturally, of course, you would rather go anywhere than to the throne of grace, and depend on any arm, like your own wisdom, do anything, rather than pray. What profit is there said Pharaoh, that I should pray unto Him. You have got Pharaoh in you, he is in your heart. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"(Exodus 5 verse 2). Ah, says a sinner, Lord do not let me give up praying, keep me at it, keep me on my knees, let me live on my knees. Let the knees of my heart, ever be bending to Thyself, to adore Thee, admire Thee, wait on Thee, seek Thy favour, Thy guidance, for the support and sustenance of my soul. O praying people, go on, and struggle through the much opposition, that is sure to make itself felt, in you. This is not a convenient minute, that must be done, that letter must be answered, that friend must be visited, this must be attended to, everything and anything, so little sometimes, that it is as if you must turn aside to pick up a pin, anything to keep you from the throne of grace.

Nature is a bad piece, a piece of sin, a piece of rubbish, a piece of hell, and shows itself mightily in opposition to prayer. Lord keep me praying, there are two things He uses to bring us to prayer, and keep us at prayer. One is necessity, that is, a pressing thing, which is very painful, when you cannot do this, or are not allowed to do that. When there is some necessity, or adversity upon you, some pressure, some affliction or something you want in your soul. Some want in providence, a lack, you have not got, something which you need, a lack in your spirit, a lack in providence, necessity. We talk about independent men, who retire from business because they have got what is called, an independent income, and are not dependant on the labour of their hands. That is right in itself, but there is no such creature, as an independent man. The Apostle Paul teaches us this, speaking of God in the Chapter read this morning, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being;"(Acts 17 verse 28). We shall never be independent, if we get to heaven, we shall be creatures, therefore dependant. If we sink into hell, we shall be creatures, and dependant. Now a saint knows this, and by moments, he rejoices, in his dependence.

Yet would I glory in this, that I am dependant, on a good God, a full Saviour, and the Holy Spirit. Dependant on Him who adopts His children into His family, on Him who gives them a robe of righteousness, on Him who cleanses them from all their iniquity, on Him who says "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:for I am God." (Isaiah 45 verse 22). Did you ever feel thankful for your dependence sinner?

Depend on Him, thou canst not fail; (Gadsby's 882 verse 4).

But He will have you know your dependence upon Him. You may get up some morning, and say, what shall I do today? I have two things to trouble me, a wicked heart and a trying providence, what shall I do? and the Holy Ghost may whisper, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble," (Psalm 50 verse 15). Make your wishes known to me, come to me with your body, with your soul, with your family, with your affliction, come to God. O what a Spirit there is, what a Holy Spirit there is, and He helps us. He helps our infirmities, The second thing therefore in prayer, is the gift of the Spirit. There is an incentive in the heart, there is a Spirit that moves that incentive. He comes, and gives occasion to pray, then He gives prayer. He gives a need for calling upon God, then He gives a spirit to call upon God. He comes, and this is a beautiful promise, did you ever plead it? "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication."(Zechariah 12 verse 10). Did you ever ask the Lord to fulfil it in you? He gives the Spirit.

"For we know not what we should pray for as we ought:"(Romans 8 verse 26). We ought to pray, but we do not know how, we do not know what to pray for. Then says the Lord, the Spirit will teach you, He is given for that purpose, among other purposes. He prompts the soul to pray, and very wonderful and very beautiful, and very helpful it is, when we are enabled, to observe the motions of the Spirit, and sometimes we pray, and hardly know what or how. We look back and say, it was good of God to teach us to pray, at that time. He causes His people to lay up a good foundation, for the time to come. Present needs are dealt with, future needs are mentioned. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:"(Matthew 26 verse 41). Wait on God, there are so many things to pray about, our own souls, our own interests, our salvation, our preservation to the end. Then our families, that God would bless them, and call them by His grace, then the church of God. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."(Ehesians 6 verse 18). So many things, praying for the nation, for all men, for the King, and for all that are in authority. Do you pray for these things?

I believe God's people are sometimes lead out of themselves, so to express it, to pray for others. Perhaps some of you know what I mean, in your past experience, you have had persons or cases laid on your hearts, and could not be quiet. Could not give the Lord rest on account of such and such things, and such friends. This is the Spirit's work, and later you may have seen, or may as yet see, how the Holy Ghost prompted you, and gave you prayer for this and that thing. "Hold Thou me up,"(Psalm 119 verse 117). keep me praying Lord. There are discouragements in this matter connected with prayer. There are great and grave discouragements. One is this, the delay on God's part, to send answers, returns are sure to come, but they do not come when we want them, or think we should have them. Delays are trials, but they are not denials, but they are trials, they are a trial of faith, as if you should say, I w'ont go any more, and leave off asking for them because no answers are given. What an evil spirit that is, what an evil spirit of unbelief it is. Unbelief causes us to depart from the living God. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." (Hebrews 3 verse 12).

I know what I am saying is true, and you know it too. Sometimes I pray, as I think earnestly, to be useful in the ministry, and then I sink, and when certain cases seem to go on, and there is no answer with respect to them, then it is, as if a spirit says, well leave it off, do not go on praying for it. And you may have just got the same spirit in another matter. "Hold Thou me up". "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, but I have been trying to pray, one may say, for years about something about my soul. I want the Lord to bless and save me, and I am just as I was at the beginning. Yes, and the man, on whom the miracle of healing was performed, was about 40 years old. The cripple was waiting 38 years at the pool. You do not know what wisdom there is in God's delays. The Lord Jesus said "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;"(Luke 18 verse 1).

And He illustrates the case by a parable "Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto Him, saying, avenge me of my adversary." (Luke 18 verses 2 & 3). But he was too indolent, or careless of his duty, to take any notice of her, until her continued coming made him, look to himself, not to her case at all, but to himself, saying if she keeps coming to me I shall be wearied, therefore I will attend to her case. "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." (verses 7 & 8). Oh we are so foolish, we take our own little world, and measure of time, and apply it to God's ways.

And because it does not come just when we think, we conclude, we fear, He will not come at all. "Men ought always to pray" "Hold up my goings in Thy path". This is an ordained way, pray, pray without ceasing, pray to your "Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly."(Matthew 6 verse 4).

Next, "Hold up my goings" (my goings) "in Thy paths," in the paths of love. Love is very easy, when the object of it is always pleasant, agreeable and does just what we would like to have done, but what if God is not always agreeable to you? He ought to be, and woe to us, that He is not, the fault is in us. Poor John Baptist, was in a sad case, in prison, and his sad case was made worse, because the Lord Jesus seemed to take no notice of him, as if He had forgotten him, till John could bear it no longer. "He sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, (Christ) Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another." (Matthew 11 verses 2 & 3). Lord have I made a mistake? I have preached Thee, I have told people on the banks of Jordan, that Thou wast the Lamb of God. Was I mistaken? So low did his faith get, so cold had his love waxed, that was what he said. Have you ever got there, have you ever been offended with Him? Berridge said:

My foolish heart would then reply
For patience pray no more.
So much my Master seemed to blame,
I thought to leave His school; (Gadsby's 300 verses 2 & 3)

Do you understand me? Do you understand John's offence? Jesus reproved him, Jesus kindly reproved him, not by sending a distinct answer, yes I am. But by working miracles, in the presence of these two disciples, that John had sent, and then He said to them, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:"(verse 4). The proofs, I am distinct, that I am the Lamb of God, that I am the Son of God, and say to him "blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." (verse 6). If you have been in John's case, may you get John's deliverance, John's God, John's answer, John's mercy, and comfort.

Love, is to be longer existing, than either faith, or hope. The three graces abide, but says Paul, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (1 Corinthians 13 verse 13). Love will outlive the others, well may the Lord help us in this. Hold up my movements in love Lord. Keep me loving Thy name, Thy person, Thy death, Thy resurrection, Thy intercession in heaven. Keep me loving Thee as a Crowned Priest, keep me loving Thee as the only Lord God, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.

Why my brethren it is a sweet thing to love the Lord, but we do not always love Him as He deserves to be loved. We shall never reach that, eternity will not suffice to lift us in love, high enough to reach, the measure of Christ's desert. I ought not to us the word measure, in any respect of His deserving, but we shall never reach that, to which might aspire, to praise Him as we ought. The fulness of praise is a great thing, love will dictate it, and one word more. "Hold up my goings, in the path of hope.

Saint's raise your expectations high;
Hope all that heaven has good;
(Gadsby's 803 second part, verse 3)

You know what hope means, it is a grace of the Spirit, He works it, He gives it an object, that is God, who is called "the God of Hope," (Romans 15 verse 13). Hope therefore has a certainty in it, but it is for the future, it belongs to the future. present things possessed, cannot be hoped for. "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Romans 8 verse 24). What you have in your hand, you cannot hope to get, you have got it, but if you have got it in your heart, something in the way of looking out, saying I hope the Lord will give it me one day, here is hope in the future. It goes out to something, that is not at present possessed, and enjoyed.

"Hope thou in God," (Psalm 42 verse 5) said the distraught, distressed, sunken Psalmist "My soul is cast down within me,) (verse 6) he got a check, and said to his soul "why art thou cast down?" (verse 11). And I think he got such a word, or such a look, or such a touch, as made him say to his soul "why art thou cast down". Did you ever expostulate with yourself, why all this trouble? why this adoo?, why all this noise, and these voices, these despairing things? And that is why this dismay, and looking around, and you say, I have plenty of sin in myself, in my circumstances, in the church, in the nation, there is plenty of reason for depression. Yes if you look to the earth, you will see nothing but dimness, darkness and anguish, but if your faith, lifts your eyes to God, then you will say "Hope thou in God," in Him, not in circumstances, hope in His power, in His faithfulness, in His goodness, in His Wisdom. "Hope thou in God" this great one, a Saviour, His Son a great one, a great King, a great Lord, a great good and blessed God. Hope in Him, hope in His promises, especially in promises, or a promise He has made over to you. The hope of a Christian is, not like the writing on the sand, not like shifting circumstances of any kind, but built on the immutable God. "For I am the Lord, I change not;" (Malachi 3 verse 6).

I might mention patience, "Be patient therefore, brethren," (James 5 verse 7) be patient in your tribulation. Think of Job, he had patience, though sometimes, in reading his book, you hardly think he had patience. "You 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." (verse 11). "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." (verse 7). Patience? Why it is a spirit, "and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." (Ecclesiastes 7 verse 8). that says God, will come. He cannot come too late, he will come. Patience says, this affliction may last long, but it must end. This chastisement will have an end, may it be a good one to me. Patience says, I will wait for the Lord, who hideth Himself from the house of Israel. Have you got it? Unbelief in you, and in himself, says of Him, make speed, let him hasten his work that we may see it. Jesus said to His enquiring Disciples, " My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready," (John 7 verse 6). O but we need God to keep us here, we need Him to keep this patience alive, and strengthen it. Nothing in circumstances can help it, but God helps it. May He help it in us, it is Himself who is the object of it, the God of patience. Now the necessity of this lies here, that we are weak, very weak, so the Psalmist felt it, he said "that my footsteps slip not".

Keep me that I be not moved, keep me a believer, lest I become an unbeliever, keep me in waiting. Keep me praying, keep me hoping, keep me living, that I may not turn aside. We need keeping dear friends, we need it as individuals, we need it as a church and congregation, we ever need keeping. Any Christian left for an hour sinks, any church left for an hour sinks, we shall never stand without God. What does religious nature do? Oh it says we must buttress this wall, we must organise, we must do something, that is what religious nature says. So religious nature begins to buttress a weak wall, with its own materials, will that stand? No never. Religious nature in me, and you, says we must do this, you must do that, will that stand? No, what will? The need of God holding us up. Plenty of snares are in the way, innumerable difficulties, arising from innumerable sins. These all conspire to make us fall, nothing will do but divine operations, the holding hand of God, the sustaining bread of life, the comforts of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the consolations which are in Christ. Nothing else, nothing less will do. What will a church do? The same. Churches begin when God goes to work, this is sure, for if ever God departs from a church, in the measure in which He leaves it, as He permits it, that church will begin to do something for itself. May God keep us, I am not without great concern about us, as to what God will do with us.

Many of us are old, weak, and cannot bear the weather, some are unable to come, many of us are sick today, quite a number are absent. But this is the thing that I am most concerned about, will God take away His presence. Will He cause the ministry to be dry, and useless to you. Will He take away the spirit of hearing from you. Will your appetite for God go, will carnality begin to prevail. If your appetite dies, for the bread of life, you may have a man in the pulpit, but you will have no bread. If your spiritual hunger goes, O what a solemn, sad thing it will be, therefore I would address a few words to you, as out of my own heart, for I think much on all these things, these days, and I would say.

Go on crying for divine support, for divine bread, for divine teaching, for the unction of the Holy One. And may the Lord give you prayer, for the ministry, that it may not be dried up, that I may not resemble the idol shepherd, of whom the Lord says, "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened" (Zechariah 11 verse 17).

"Hold Thou me up," hold the church up, hold faith up, hold simplicity up, hold Godliness up, hold us up. in pressing after a knowledge of God after revelations of Jesus Christ. And if we are so held up, then the answer must come in God's time, for He never gives faith, to disappoint it. He never gives prayer to let it go unanswered, returns must come.

May the Lord look upon us, and do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3 verse 2).

Amen