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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
13th November 1927

Text: Romans 14 verse 4

Who art thou that judgest another man' servant ? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

While you were singing the last hymn this morning, the last clause of this verse fell on my mind. A suitable word to people who realise two things, first their danger and their foes, and second their weakness. In some measure, I realise both of those things. My danger, my weakness, and I doubt not that it is the experience of a goodly number of you. You feel persuaded that there are dangers within, dangers without, and perhaps in some special way dangers ahead. How can you meet them, and hope for victory ? Weakness felt, makes you all but cowards, and makes you wish you might avoid the dangers, but understanding in the way of the Lord, will keep you from thinking you can avoid the dangers.

Then the weakness will be painful, and that is how I myself feel, and almost before I left the pulpit this morning, painfully aware of how I had failed in speaking to you, this was my feeling. Now if the Lord will, I shall try to speak to the people this-evening about this word, the last part of this verse, "Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." This is a very wonderful Epistle, as indeed all the Epistles are, the whole word of God is wonderful, but it is very wonderful to read this Epistle, the first part of it is doctrinal, ending with the eleventh chapter, the second part from the twelfth chapter sets forth that which is a gracious and acceptable exhortation to the Lord's people. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (verse 1). This exhortation he gives on the ground of the mercy of the Lord, mercies to them. I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And I am sure you will feel the mercies of the Lord from time to time, realise the sweetness of this exhortation and hope to present, according to these words, your bodies that is yourself. Come body and soul under weakness, fear everything, and present yourself in these conditions before the Lord. The whole of this chapter is very beautiful on that ground, the mercies of the Lord. How we are to deal with people who are not good to us, even enemies. It tells us how we are to behave ourselves in this, if an enemy hunger feed him.

We are not to say, well he deserves it and I am glad, if he thirst give him to drink, heap coals of fire on his head. Did you ever ask the Lord, in the case of your having an enemy, to grant that favour, and an opportunity came to you to do him good, that you might have grace to do it ? The thirteenth chapter opens with, and carries on a word respecting our position under authority. We live under government, powers ordained of God, and says the Apostle, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God". (verse 1). So do not resist them.

What a nation that would be, in which people were under the authority of the scripture, and under that power to be submissive. May we all take notice of this word, and especially the people of God to whom special mercies have been given, so as to oblige them, in the fear of God, to submit themselves to the powers that be. This chapter, the fourteenth comes into the church, comes to the Lord's people as united together, and there comes one among them who, in some measure is weak respecting liberty, the full liberty of the gospel, in respect to the law of Moses, and so on. He does not enjoy meats and drinks and seasons, and years, thus appeal to him for he cannot find himself free. There are stronger people in the church, and these may be apt to despise this weak one, but says the Lord by Paul, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not;" (verse 3) The weak one may not at all understand the liberty that the strong ones have, and they may judge him. This is a wrong judgement on both sides, and it is reprov'd by the Spirit in these words, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye," (verse 1).

The word receive, generally in the scriptures means take to yourselves. Do not despise him, do not hold him at arms length, do not stand aloof from him as if he were not deserving of your notice. But receive him, and do, if you can, what Aquila and Priscilla did when they heard Apolos, "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." (Acts 18 verse 26). In any case treat him kindly and be indulgent to his scruples. It would be good for the church of God if such a spirit prevailed constantly. When anyone strong in faith finds a weak brother, to be enabled to regard this word, and treat his conscientious objections to this or that thing, with tenderness, do not despise him. Also on the other hand, when this weak brother sees the strength of others, he should not judge them, nor bring his stumbling conscience to be a rule for those who are stronger in some particulars than he is. This harmony thus set before us is beautiful, why it makes the church just like the horses in Pharaohs chariots, (Song of Solomon 1 verse 9), ever running smoothly.

It makes them like sheep from the washing, (Song of Solomon 4 verse 2). It makes them, according to Christ's word, "that they may be one," (John 17 verse 11). My brethren in church fellowship, look at this scripture, and I do not say it because I am aware of anything like this as being among us, but as a suitable word to govern us in all our ways. To be tender hearted, gentle and meek to each other. Let each seek his brothers good, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Philippians 2 verse 4). They were far removed, it may be, from the scruples of some of these Roman Christian members of the church. There may be things even today which some of us can do, and which others of us may not feel able to do. Now you strong ones do not despise those of us who are weak in any particular. And may the Lord keep us who are weak in some particular from judging our stronger brethren.

Let us have, one shoulder to pull together, and not as the word is in one place, "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear." (Zechariah 7 verse 11). May the Lord help us, for the Spirit of God says, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant". If you enter as a stranger or visitor into an house, and begin to judge the servant in that house you are an intruder into things that do not belong to you. "Who art thou", says Paul to these two peoples, the strong and the weak, "Who art thou that judgest another man. The strong one should not despise the weak, nor should the weak one judge adversely, for that is what is intended. Judge the strong one, but go together before the Lord, and then come the words about which I wish, as the Lord may help me, to speak to you. "Yea, he shall be holden up," though he may be judged adversely, wrongly or unkindly. "He shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand."

Is it not beautiful to see a promise, and power to fulfil it united as here ? How easy it is for you and me to make promises, and have no power to fulfil them. How easy it is for us to promise, that is to say, beyond our means, but it is not so with our gracious God. His promise by Paul, for it is a promise made by inspiration, that the weak "shall be holden up," and he gives us his reason for the promise, "he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand". He stands on this man's side, He has power to hold him up, He will not let him go. And he exhorts, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God". (Romans 15 verse 7). He has taken this man to Himself, put out His hand of grace and mercy, and drawn this man to the cross, and in the cross has accepted him.

Do you know the man, do you know the man whom Christ has received ? When you rejected yourself, so to speak, when you despised yourself for your sins, when you hated yourself, when you thought, could God have mercy on such a wretch as I, and you feared that He would only despise you. That He could honour you, and by so doing, did not you find that He received you ? You went trembling, He graciously received you with a smile. God has received sinners, O blessed sinner whom God receives. Is not it wonderful for the Lord to receive sinners, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." (Luke 15 verse 2). This expresses a distinct dealing of God with the sinner, what a sad religion is that, which never has a distinct thing in it, neither evil nor good, neither death nor life, neither distance nor nearness, neither riches nor happiness, nothing distinct all nebulous. No, mark, no light, no care, everything just mixed up. But what a mercy to have something definite here and there, though it be but seldom, you get something from God. Yet really to get something, though in ever so many months, or it may be years, to get something definite, and this is a definite thing, for God hath received him.

He has not judged him, the strong one has not been judged, and the weak one has been judged wrongly, he was despised, but God has received him. May the Lord receive you and me again and again, we need it. It is good to be received, blessed to be received, and may I again say it, it is distinct. It is something on which, perhaps at a later day, you are enabled to put your finger on it and say, though in many things I have been wrong, in many things very foolish, in all things wicked, I have come short, yet there is this one thing, Jesus met my soul, He received me a sinner. He dealt kindly with me a sinner, He spoke mercifully to me a sinner. God hath received him, "he shall be holden up." Imperfect as in both cases, either strong or weak, you will say here, speaking about imperfection, quibbling about an unnecessary thing, stumbling at an unessential thing, still "he shall be holden up." God is able to make him stand.

Now the first thing with respect to standing is the ground, if you stand you must have something to stand on. If we stand with respect to God and Eternity there is a ground, let us notice this first, it is important. You see this is before Him, and it is before you I hope, we must needs die and we must stand before God. If that is before us, the next thing will be a solemn honest simple enquiry, is there a ground on which we can really, hopefully stand with respect to God ? Because although these exhortations are so beautiful, and necessary in each case, it comes to this really, we have to do with only one and that is God.

The day is not far from us when all other things will fade away from us, but this will remain. Now what ground is there revealed in this book ? This is the only standard, what ground is there revealed on which a sinner as such may stand, hopefully stand, prayerfully stand, lovingly and longingly stand ? You must have an answer. I know many of you in your own souls experience, as well as in the doctrine of the word will say, It is nothing less, none other than the very Lord Jesus, whom God has set forth to be, a propitiation for our sins. "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins:" (1 John 2 verses 1 & 2). That will do, one makes Rutherford say so beautifully,

I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land. (Mrs Anne Ross Cousin)

Happy is the man who is brought to that by the Holy Ghost. Now dear sinner, whatever your weakness may be, or whatever your strength is, this is the ground on which God will bring you, (or has brought you as being one of his), to stand upon.

But says the sinner, I shall fall, as he may be looking at his lusts like a lion in the street, at his sins as inherent, unborn, unrebukable, and inseparable from his life, and say how can I hope to get safely through with all these things ? But when the Holy Spirit graciously draws near, and brings the Lord Jesus Christ and His merits to the view of his faith, then the sinner says, I stand upon that ground. Nothing more shall move him, for "God is able to make him stand." Now on this ground the sinner standeth by faith, "for by faith ye stand," (2 Corinthians 1 verse 24). Thou standeth by faith, Paul in this Epistle says, "and thou standest by faith." And here is much of the living exercise of the saints of the Most High God. Here is that by which they draw near and ask for things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who says, "If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it." (John 14 verse 14).

Stand here my friends, conscience, prejudice, hardness, unbelief, the prevalence of some sins will all come to stumble you, and may I a poor minister, say this to the living, stand here, pray here, beg here, wait here, and wait again. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." (Proverbs 8 verse 34). He is a blessed man, and God is able to keep His people looking this way, standing on this merit, praying on this ground and no other. "He shall be holden up."

Though the devil roars, though sin stumbles him, though his conscience stumbles him again and yet again, and he stands shivering, "he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." This never, never changes, nor diminishes, this merit will bear, does bear, and will eternally bear the whole church of God, and bear a poor trembling sinner, who comes with his sins, fears, weakness and tremblings, and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner", (Luke 18 verse 13), renew Thy mercies Lord, and may God keep me and you here, this will do. I might leave off here, and you might go home with just this one thought to meditate upon, and find it sufficient to warm your hearts. This is enough to warm my heart, which is so often like a piece of ice. O the merit of the Lord Jesus, the infinite kindness of the sweet and gracious Lord Jesus, who interposed His precious blood for sinners, and who says to them, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11 verse 28). Faith stands here but, I am to say a little more.

The next word shall be, God is able to make this sinner with his mistakes, misjudgment of God, and of himself also, and of others, to stand in hope, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5 verse 5). Further ground of this is given to us in this Epistle, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans verses 1 & 2). Think of it, grace, a ground wherein a sinner may stand, grace is free, grace is God's mercy, God's favour, God's purpose, God's love in Christ, God's love in giving Christ, and in giving grace to Christ for a sinner. This is the grace of God, wherein the sinner stands. There is a firm, footing here, a rock beneath the tottering feet of the sinner. This is the Rock of ages, from off of this Rock no sinner shall ever be washed away. "God is able to make him stand."

Hope is a great thing, good hope through grace we read of, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 16). Good hope is great, and good is wonderful, and hope is for the future. You may sometimes say, though I am what I am, I have a hope of having a change, a hope even of growing in grace, a hope of ending well, a hope of being blest in my soul as I go on in my journey, and of being blest at the end, a good hope, but this hope must have sufficient ground. As the Apostle writing to Timothy says of God.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Timothy 1 verse 9). That is enough, but doubts come, fears arise, temptations beset us, and many evils surround us, but this will do, as brought home by the Spirit and revealed to us. Good hope here finds an anchorage, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." (Hebrews 6 verse 19). Not like the writing in the sand, nor like a natural hope of things taking a turn one day, and being better. Not that, but a hope that though a sinner, and though we must remain sinners, for there is no hope of being any other than a sinner in respect of the flesh, a hope that God has given us a place in His Son. Given us grace in regeneration, given us the grace of faith, and now the grace of hope not only as a ground, but also an object. And this object we have set forth in the scripture, "O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." (Jeremiah 14 verse 8).

That is the object of hope, not the same as the ground of it, but the object of hope. When a man viewing the Saviour, and feeling a little of His fear, viewing His mercy and His love, is enabled to say, I hope the Lord will draw out His loving kindness to me, you remember the prayer in the Psalm. "O continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee:" (Psalm 36 verse 10). The word in the margin is, "O continue to draw out Thy loving-kindness". That is what we want, and it means, in gospel language, continue to shed abroad the love of God in my heart. Continue O Holy Spirit to show me the Lord Jesus, continue to guide me into all truth, continue to speak to me through Thy word, and continue to speak to me in the ministry. If you are favoured with such a blessing, continue to ask the Holy Spirit to help you in all things, and hope will go out with these petitions, and you will say at times I really have a hope sometimes that in some lively way the Lord will condescend to mercifully and powerfully bring me honourably to the grave. God is able to make me stand.

The loss of ones own strength is much better than self confidence for it makes room for the strength of God, who is able to make him stand in hope. Do you stand there ? Look at the ground, then at the object, are you standing there ? If the devil aims at your overthrow, do not be surprised, he lets the world alone. But he will not let a saint alone, you will never have this mercy of true peace, as long as the enemy is allowed to disturb you, you must expect it. O but "God is able to make him stand." Now one may say but what about floods, what about flames, you may get both of these, but then says the Lord,

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overthrow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God." (Isaiah 43 verses 2 & 3). So hope still remains,

Saint's, raise your expectations high;
Hope all that heaven has good; (Gadsby's 803 Pt. 2 verse 2)

This will sometimes animate the soul of a man in trouble, yea, he may find the truth of Rutherford's words also. "The will of God is a bed for a saint in the fire, he can lie down there, even in a fiery furnace in the holy will of God." "He shall be holden up" in the truth, "for God is able to make him stand." Some may say, of course we know the truth, no my friends it is not of course, it is of grace. The truth that is in you, as John says in his Epistle, "For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth," (3 John verse 2). If the truth is in you it will remain, for again John says, "For ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1 John verse 2). That is the way of it, you may often have forgotten some of the truth, that God has spoken on your heart, and then the Spirit brings it back. You may have forgotten promises for a long time, and the Spirit brings them back, yes He makes a memory, a great and sweet thing. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14 verse 26). And it is wonderful to get, now and again a remembrance of some things that the Lord has said to you. "You shall be holden up" in those very things in the truth.

The Apostle Paul says to Timothy "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 1 verse 13). "Knowing of whom thou has learned them." (chapter 2 verse 14). And the Lord says to the degenerate church, "Remember therefore how thou has received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." "Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Revelation 3 verses 3 & 11). You cannot hold what the Lord has not given to you, but if He has given His Son to you, if He has spoken a promise to you, if He has revealed a doctrine in you, then the exhortation comes, hold it fast. The progress God's people make is not what the world calls progressing and improving. We poor people hoping in God's mercy and in His truth make progress in a different way.

"The house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." (2 Kings 19 verse 30). Going down and down into the ancient things of God, the gospel of the grace of God, the truth, as the truth is in Jesus, that and that alone causes a person to bear fruit upward. If you take root downward into grace spiritually, you will bear gracious fruit upward. There is no other way, so hold fast. "He shall be holden up". Perhaps you feel that your hold of the truth is very feeble, you are hardly able to say at times that you do hold it, you perhaps think, you only think about it, and hardly more than that. But one thing may prove to you at times that there is a real holding of it, this, that you beg of God that He will not let you give up that on which you have been enabled to hope, that in which you have cast the anchor of hope. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." (Hebrews 6 verse 19).

Oh how often have I begged of God that He would not let me give up what He has, as I trust given to me, and taught me. Treacherous is ones nature, wicked is ones heart. Oh says faith, Lord do not let me give it up, help me to hold fast. "He shall be holden up" in weakness, but that is not against you. It troubles you, but it is not against you, for you will prove that "out of weakness (you are) made strong." (Hebrews 11 verse 34). Trust Him therefore, hold fast. Remember the ancient things, "ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up," (Jeremiah 18 verse 34), do not go after new things. Remember the eternal love of God, remember the covenant of grace and what the Lord has put into it, even unclean things and cleansed them.

Oh that covenant was presented to Peter, He fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Hold that fast. Hold fast to this connection, hold fast the blessed, the essential, the central truth of all truths, the doctrine of the Trinity.

That is the centre of everything, the ground of everything, the source, the cause of everything that is good. The life of the truth, the grace of the church all emanate from this great God. Hold this fast, if you do, you will find the sweetness of it sometimes.

And sometimes you will find the sacred awe of it, overshadowing you. There is a God in heaven, the Father, The Son and the Holy Ghost. And sometimes you will get a sight of this glorious, God the Father in the Son, and the glorious God the Holy Ghost in the Son and coming from Him, and the glorious Son Himself, the very immediate Son of God. And it may be you will find yourself almost like Elijah, "that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering of the cave," (1 Kings 19 verse 13), bowing deeply before this mystery. It is a great mystery, I would be constantly mentioning it to you, because it is the central truth, the only fulness of truth is here. "God is able to make him stand". Suppose one says, well I do not understand it, if you did what then, you would be professing to understand what is not to be understood by the creature.

What one writes of the love of God, may be said of God Himself, as the Hymnwriter say,

God only knows the love of God. (Gadsby's 249 verse 3)

So God only knows who and what God is, not only is He incomprehensible, but comprehensible, happily apprehensible. Do you feel weak ? Do you feel your ignorance ? Do you feel as if your grasp of this could not be called a grasp, that you have scarcely touched it, that it has hardly touched you. Well, but God is able to maintain what you have, and to give you more, if you confess your ignorance. I can walk with you in that, if you feel weakness, I can walk with you. Let us then together cry to God that He would teach us more and more of this mystery. May we not stumble at it, because of its majesty and incomprehensibility, but wait on the Holy Spirit to bring it to us. "God is able to make us stand."

He is able to make us stand in affliction and trouble. Plenty of this will come, which as we can bear, God will send. He will send as much as we need and no more, but Oh, stand in it. The standing in this is, as I judge set before us in the Hebrews, where the Apostle says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 11 verse 11). The exercise is the standing in it, not running away from it, not trying to throw it off, not lifting up your head as if you disdained to notice it, not sinking as if you faint under it, but standing in it, waiting on God in it, seeking good out of it, seeking the will of God by means of it. After all that, comes the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You know what troubles you have, troubles in your soul, troubles in your person, family troubles, business troubles here and there.

And as I painfully know from observation and intimate connection in some things, troubles in the churches, all the troubles that come to poor men in various churches, but "God is able to make him stand." All these things will bring us to a profitable exercise, and a profitable experience. There is one affliction coming to us, may the Lord be with us in it, we shall need Him. We shall need Him when we stand on the brink of Jordan, we shall need to be upheld there, and "God is able" to hold us up there, even there. When heart and flesh fail the Psalmist says, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Psalm 73 verse 26). Think on all these things, may God help us to meditate upon them.

He is "able to make us stand," in the love of God and holiness, there is plenty of talk about the love of God, but there is a love of holiness which is an essential part of vital religion. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of His saints." (Psalm 97 verse 10). Does not Hart express your desire when He says,

But I would be holy. (Gadsby's 780 verse 8)

I would walk in all pleasing, I would know and do the will of God, but I am weak, I soon give way, I give way to my temper, I lose my standing, I get into a state of hurrying and confusion. This is what the Lord will do, perhaps He sends a kind rebuke and that brings you to your senses, so to speak. you come back to this, I would be holy, Lord save me from living in sin, keep me from indulging sin, enable me to walk in Thy clean fear. "He shall be holden up," God will not despise the work of His own hands, and that which He has wrought in the soul. That very thing, He is able to hold us up in, and so to the very end.

Perseverance in our race,
We draw from Jesus' blood. (Gadsby's 796 verse 2)

Anchor there poor sinner, that will do. You say, I am too weak, "God is able" in His love, in His power, in His promise, in His gospel, in His Son. Able to hold up the weak person. Now this may be a word in season for some of us, regarding, may be, our future and our future troubles, unknown to us at present, and we are too weak to meet them, too weak to live through them, too weak to bear them. The Lord says by His servant, poor weakling, I do not contradict you as to your weakness, but ye "shall be holden up." "God is able to hold you up." The bruised reed shall be held up, and the smoking flax shall not be put out. The weakest believer is one dear to the Lord, for as Hart says,

And to Him the weakest is dear as the strong.
(Gadsby's 804 verse 7)

Therefore may we be enabled to lift up our head believing, as Paul says, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Romans 13 verse 11). When we first believed, and remembering this too, that God changes not, He changes not, what is that to me ? one says, Everything, if you belong to God you are safe, but hell will be your portion if you do not. He changes not, neither in His anger nor in His love.

Amen.