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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday evening 18 July 1926

ROMANS 8 v 13

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live"

Concerning the one particular and vile deed of the body, about which I endeavoured to speak this morning - namely unbelief - one might continue a good deal if helped, for it is a peculiarly evil, abominable thing. It is the atheism of our fallen nature showing itself, and acting according to its utmost power in the form of disputing against the Lord, of reasoning about Him, about His work, casting doubts on His wisdom, putting stumbling blocks in His way, limiting Him in His power. It is an unutterable evil, and what can be said about it. But I think every child of God will be able to fill in for himself particulars as to their own experience in that regard and so, by the Lord's help I shall show how the Spirit enables sinners to mortify this deed of the body, for He uses means. It is not, so to express it, a simple act of omnipotence passed on the soul from time to time, but the use of means which He Himself has ordained and puts within the reach of faith, whereby the sinner obeys the Lord's word - Abide in Me and I in you. And if I can, by the mercy of God, express the matter, as it should be expressed, and that will be a great honour put on me, and it may be a very great help to you, I will speak in the following way.

First of all the means the Spirit uses to enable us to mortify unbelief is the blessed Word of God. This Book, this inerrant Book, divinely inspired and wisely suited to the various cases of the saints of God is taken in different parts of it from time to time and put into the hand of faith; the sword of the Spirit. You will never manage to arrest unbelief and kill it by any sword of your own, by any resolution you may arrive at in your mind respecting it, but by this Divine Spirit, who searcheth all things, and brings to remembrance the things of God in the Scriptures. The Covenant of Grace, the

Person of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the death, the resurrection, the ascension into heaven, and intercession there of the Lord Jesus; the promises, the precepts, the exhortations, the warnings, these, being all of them in the Word, the Spirit uses them from time to time enabling those to whom He speaks and applies them to resist this wicked thing, and aim deadly blows at this wicked deed, unbelief. O, it is a mercy for the Lord to give you a word. A religion without the Scriptures may be real, as it was in the case of the dying thief, and as it might have been - there being nothing contrary to it - in the case of the publican. It is said, he was justified. But when people live, are exercised, have cases, burdens, needs, appetite for God, then ordinarily the Holy Ghost takes of the Scriptures, takes of Christ's Person, and His work, and makes them over to the sinner, gives them to him as a sword wherewith he may fight this inveterate foe, unbelief. You will know what I mean who have had this high favour, the Word of the living God coming in at a juncture when most needed, at a moment when, without it, you would have fainted, as the Psalmist said - "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD ....." (Psalm 27 v 13). Or some word which was given to you, perhaps long ago, is revived in a new necessity, a new trouble, a new assault of the enemy, this bitter enemy, unbelief. I have looked at, and admired at times, what is said of the disciples - "Then they remembered His words". And if you have got a word in your heart from the Spirit it will never go from you, but you may forget it. It will never cease to be yours, but you may forget it, and when you may, again and again, come into a new need of it, the Spirit may mercifully revive it, and make it as if it were just new to you, and then you may say, Why I remember, I remember when the Lord said such and such a word to me. I remember when He gave me a sight of the Lord Himself in it, and by means of it, and this puts new energy into your faith, puts new desires, warm, living, hungry desires in your heart, that He would be your God; that He would help you to the end, and give you grace to endure to the end. It is the Spirit's work who inspired it, and He takes of it, and speaks it home to His people. If anyone should tell you that it is not necessary now that a sinner should hear the voice of God in his soul, that all he has to do is just to go to the Bible, and take what he thinks he needs at a given moment, do not listen to him. But if you come into real need of it, and the Spirit then mercifully speaks a word to your heart, that will be His means of

enabling you to mortify that inveterate enemy, that terrible enemy, that desolating enemy of your nature - unbelief. Mark the Word of God, and remember as well as you can, and plead as earnestly as you can, any Scripture that has at any time been made over to you by the Lord. Yet unbelief wont give way until it is obliged to do. It may urge against even your cleaving to it. Certain things it may urge; perhaps that you have never had a full fulfilment of it; that it could not have been given to you by the Lord because you forgot all about it; that you have lived perhaps for so long without remembering it. This spirit of unbelief will work in this way to eliminate from the Word its abiding nature, or to dispute your right to it because you have not been able to hold it fast in your memory. But the Spirit coming, again, and again, and giving you to see what a faithful God there is in heaven who, as you believed at the moment spoke the Word to you, that will enable you to plead it. Should He give you to see that wondrous character of God which I have often named to you, and which I will name again - "God that cannot lie"; O, think of it, "God that cannot lie" - that will be a means given to you to use against the enemy. Lord, said David on one occasion of need - "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope" (Psalm 119 v 49). And the word given to him looked to the future, and gave him a view of the future, and with that in his heart he went before his Lord and said, Thou hast said that Thou wilt make Thy servant a house for a great while to come and therefore Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee. "Do as Thou hast said". (2 Samuel 7) It is unbelief's work to turn the eye from God. It is the work of faith, when that work is in power in the heart, to turn the eye and the heart, and the pleading, and the urging upon the Lord's notice, of that case to which He has spoken, of that word which He has given. O for faith, and O for the Word of God, that we may really believe what we were reading just now - "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". One naked word from this given to you is better than all the gold in all the gold mines in the world. O, how rich is that sinner to whom the Holy Spirit gives a word. But then this word is to be used. It is a means, it is a promise, it is a means that you may - by the help of the Spirit giving it to you and maintaining it in you - you may cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. And if you notice the workings of faith in the Spirit's power, and the workings of unbelief, you will see how exactly opposite to

each other they are. Faith says - "My soul thirsteth for God". Unbelief says, There is no God; a horrible thing, but unbelief is a daring spirit, it is an atheist. Well, that is one means in the Spirit's hand whereby a sinner is enabled to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life whereunto he is called by the Lord.

The second means I would name is prayer. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee ....." "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God". "Pray without ceasing". "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto ....." "Praying in the Holy Ghost". Go into your closet, said the Lord. When you will pray, shut your door about you and pray to your Father which is in secret. Daily visits to the throne of grace are not easy. A sense of sinfulness, a searching dispensation in some Scripture, and perhaps in some circumstance, bringing you to know that your whole being is exposed to the gaze of God, will make it not easy, but, says the Apostle in that place in the Hebrews that I may just mention, though there is no creature that is not naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, yet "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens...." Where the Apostle speaks in another place - "Let us draw near". "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Now the prayer of faith is that prayer that labours to enter into Christ, labours to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man, labours to enter into that blessed rest that the Person and sacrifice of Christ make. This is that that is before the soul and prayer is the way to it. It is ordained by the Lord that what He has given in Christ and secured in the Covenant for His people they shall ask for. "For all these things" - mentioned in the Covenant - "will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do them for them." There is no substitute for prayer. Secret prayer God has ordained. There are many difficulties in the way of it. Our natural, wicked aversion to it, the enmity of our hearts, the pride of our hearts, the wicked wish to be independent of a good God; these make many difficulties, but they are overcome. How are they overcome? Why, says the Lord - "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the

inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." And then the gracious result is, and they shall mourn. The land shall mourn, the whole land shall mourn, and every family shall mourn apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of David apart and their wives apart. It will always be followed by that. I made a remark this morning, which I venture here to repeat. I said that the work of the Holy Ghost is definite, and is it not in that verse set forth? I will give them prayer, and that shall be followed by looking on a crucified Saviour, and that look shall be followed by mourning over Him, mourning over yourself. This is the means God uses, and gives into the hands of His people by the operation of the Spirit to mortify this deed of the body. Do you know it? Do you understand it experimentally? Have you had that Holy Spirit with you, in you? Has He caused you to go with weeping and with supplications, as the promise is? "With weeping, and with supplications will I lead them". (Jeremiah 31 v 9) And that word is followed by this - They "shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd....." (Jeremiah 31 v 12). God does unite things marvellously in experience, even as He has united them in His Word. Prayer and answer, prayer and good things, prayer and manifestations, prayer and overcoming; these are joined and "What God has joined let no man", let no dead Calvinist, let no hard-hearted professor, let no ungraciously confident person "put asunder". God has joined these two. If you pray in the Holy Ghost you will receive an answer. If you have the spirit of grace and of supplications, you will get a sight of Christ crucified, and will repent. If you "Open your mouth wide" under the gracious dictation of the Spirit, then you will get that mouth filled. If you pray "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all persevering ...." (Ephesians 6 v 18) you will get one day to the temple with your Samuel, and say, "For this child I prayed", and I lend him to the Lord for ever. You will join with the Psalmist and say "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications", and also you will find encouragement for the future. "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live". A nebulous religion is a very poor religion;

nothing distinct, neither conviction, nor comfort, distinct is very poor, and everyone who receives the Spirit of grace and of supplications has something distinct, definite, something done, and something following the work - "They shall look on Me whom they have pierced". And is not that wonderful? Mentally a professor may look on Christ and admire His character, or infidelity may deny His divinity and His vicarious death, but through faith, standing in the power of God and the Spirit of grace and supplications, being given, then the sinner comes to say, "I know whom I have believed", and that sinner goes to Christ. "To whom coming". "To whom coming as unto a living stone". Coming for supplies, for deliverances, for manifestations, for establishment. Coming to a living fountain of waters, coming to pleasures which are at God's right-hand for evermore. Coming to Him. O, what a mercy it is to have prayer given.

Prayer indited by the Lord  
The Lord will surely hear

Now dear friends, let us come again and ask ourselves, at this point, Do we know this? Do we get this sustenance? Do we know what it is at particular times to pray particularly; when there is some comfortable access; when it is not a mere kneeling, it is not a mere ejaculating, as you are walking, or sitting; it is just a breathing out of your souls with an unspoken energy, with groanings which cannot be uttered, which you cannot understand, but which He that searcheth the heart - and knows well that you are inspired by the Spirit in that kind of prayer - understands. "He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit" What you intend, and aim at, and desire, He knows. O what a favour it is to be a praying sinner. Think of it. You do not pray against a dead wall, but breathe your unutterable groanings into the ear of a compassionate High Priest who is much more, infinitely much more ready to give than a praying person is to receive. It is difficult to believe that, O very difficult. You may say, Why Lord, I am quite ready and Thou art backward, but it is not so. He is ready. "The Lord was ready to save me", whereas he, poor man, said his life was cut off, was just like a weaver's shuttle, and he should see no more good.

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

O the deadness of our souls sometimes. This I say out of my own painful experience, it is a sad and solemn state to be in when, if you pray, it is that God would give you a breath of prayer. If you look to Him, it is that He would shine into your dark heart, and give you to see light in His light. Pray, poor sinner, "if thou canst or canst not speak" This is a weapon - against this unbelief cannot stand really - this is a weapon put into the hand of faith. O when these two things unite, the Word of God and prayer; when the Spirit gives you a sight of a good God, a full, and gracious God, a promising God, a God who gives out His gracious promises to needy souls; when He gives you some prospect, the spirituality, and beauty of which, your heart acknowledges; when He gives you some warning, the need of which you are made to feel; when He gives you an exhortation which your soul desires to obey; all this is His blessed work, and a means whereby faith is strengthened, and the soul says to his enemy, I must obey, I must walk before the Lord, and I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

If we can live day after day, more or less comfortably, without prayer, we are in a sad condition even if we are born again. And when again conviction of our state is borne in upon our consciences with divine power, and in heavenly light, then we shall see the evil condition, the wicked deed of unbelief, and against this we are stirred up and feel what Paul says is true - It is high time to awake from the sleep, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give us light.

The third means the Holy Spirit uses is somewhat difficult for me to speak about, but still it is in the Scriptures, the ministry of the gospel. Among the gifts Christ received for men, even for the rebellious, was the gift of Apostles - that gift has ceased - of pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. It may be even with some of you that it is much more a matter of custom to attend

here or elsewhere, than a matter of hearing as for eternity. When God sends a minister to preach and places him over a people, then is committed to his care and charge the most solemn responsibility and work that can ever be given to a man on earth. There is no work upon earth so important, so great, so solemn, as the work of the ministry. What a habit people may acquire of seeking, when they go to a service, to hear a sermon, and yet not to say, in secret, Lord say something to me by the minister. Pastors and teachers, think of it - it makes one tremble, but it is there - Pastors and teachers, to teach the good, and right way of God. A Pastor to look after the flock, lead it into green pastures, to open the Word of God, to be, in doctrine, incorrupt; in practice, pure. To speak, as enabled, the whole counsel of God that may be profitable, that is profitable to all who have faith to mix with it. A true minister will, at times, without knowing it, so speak to consciences, that the people may be ready to say, one to another, Who has told him about us? A minister may so speak, that where there is a broken heart, and he knows it not, he will be the means of pouring oil, and comfort, and peace into that heart. And he may be the means of warning people, and showing them the danger of indifference to their state, and showing them the blessedness of being enabled to follow hard after God. And this is a means in the hands of the Spirit whereby the carnality, and the unbelief, and the hardness of heart, and the many wanderings of the mind, may be fought against by those who have real faith, faith wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. We see in the Scriptures - and I doubt not some of you have observed it - the vast importance that is there given to the work of the ministry. And in the word I have quoted you see the greatness of it - "For the perfecting of the saints". And Paul writes to one and says to him, Now bring me on that nothing may be wanting to me. Tell me the counsel of God, not only the Covenant of Grace, but how men participate in the blessings of it. Not only speak of Christ, but how He comes to be known, how He is made known. What He is, what He did, where He is, what He is doing, His care for the flock, His gracious care for every child of God, His intercession, His presenting of His blessed work on earth, in heaven, for that is His intercession. The work of the ministry is for the establishment of the people of God. Paul, an Apostle, went about establishing the churches, and exhorting them that it is through much tribulation that they must enter into the kingdom. And now, in their measure, every



true minister has to do the same work, to exhort, to reprove, to speak with authority. People today seem very much to think that they are at liberty to receive or reject whatever may be said in the pulpit. Thanks be to God, it is not so everywhere, nor with every person, but it is a solemn thing, very, very solemn, to have a ministry and sit under a ministry that God has given, very solemn. We find the Apostle speaking on this point, thus - "Obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you". What a solemn word. No minister sent of God wants, or seeks, any authority over a congregation or a church, beside, and beyond, that which the authority of the word gets in the conscience, and in the affections. He will have all he wants if he gets two things - souls for his hire, and seals to his ministry. He will get all he wants, I say, if he gets those two things. Reprove - says the Apostle to Titus and to Timothy - teach with authority, and reprove, and exhort. Exhortations - they are not much used today - and yet, not only is a minister to exhort, but the saints are to exhort one another, and so much the more as they see the day approaching. Now when God makes use of a minister, that strengthens the hearer, strengthens his faith, gives him views and sweet feelings concerning the Person and work of Christ, opens to him the blessedness of gospel liberty, that he has access to the Father through the Son by the Holy Ghost and at such times faith, thus strengthened, says to unbelief, Begone

Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near

This is what God owns, this is the great work He has sent His servants to do. To teach, to be Pastors, to look after the flock. And one of the principal ways in which Pastors look after their flocks is by secret prayer for them, by labouring in word and doctrine. And I think I am right in saying that probably in most cases the chief work of any service that the minister is engaged in is done before he comes to the pulpit. The chief work may be done when many of his hearers are fast asleep, and God hears him as he mentions one and another in his church and congregation, as he seeks the good of the body and the edifying of the body of Christ in love. And when the Lord is pleased to make use of any sermon, then it is for this purpose, to enable the

people to mortify the deeds of the body. Do you find it so at all? Do you get anything that abides? Anything that tells you how short you are, and that sets before you the fountain of supply? Anything that shows you the evil of bondage, bondage to any sin, any lust, any fashion in this world? And that tells you that the only ornaments that you can have really before God, to please Him with, are those which the Spirit gives? Do you get anything from God in, and by means of, the ministry? The Lord knows my trouble, and sorrow, at seeing so little done, so little fruit, so little glory brought forth to the praise and glory of His great Name.

Now these three means that I have named, I think I may say, are the chief means that God makes use of to His people's hearts, whereby they may be enabled to follow this word - "If ye through the Spirit - using them in your own cases - do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live". With this in your souls you cannot be worldly without rebuke. With this in your memory, you cannot go forward as if you knew nothing. With this before your faith, you cannot obey the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. With this used, and used by the Spirit, and then by yourselves, you cannot be conformed to this world; you cannot be content to be unacquainted with the Lord, cannot be content to be unacquainted with communion with Him. No, you will want, and seek earnestly, that this may be fulfilled in you - Mortify the deeds of the body. You wont want then to live after the flesh, wont wish to be conformed to this world. Then you will see the evil of that spirit that made Israel say to Samuel, Give us a king that we may be like unto the nations round about us. No, you will say, Lord, let us live in Thee, and live to Thee, and live for Thee, and bring forth fruit that shall be praise and glory to Thy great Name. "If ye live after the flesh" and so live as to die in that condition, then you will die eternally. But if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; if you say, No, I have served the devil, and I have served myself too long, may the Lord help me now to deny self - the greatest act of self-denial that can ever be - and follow Him in faith, and humble love, that will indeed be a very great favour. Here I leave it. May the Lord help us to regard this and follow Him in it.