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Sermon Preached at Horam on June 3rd 1970 by Mr R S Jupp

“Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” Psalm 17 v 5.

Dear friends, this desire and this prayer that is set forth here by the Psalmist under divine inspiration, we who desire to fear the Lord need this to be fulfilled within our hearts day by day, and possibly on numerous occasions hour by hour. We notice that his eyes were taken off everything else, and he was concentrated upon himself. And that is a spot and a place that the Lord does bring all His people to. Not that I would speak unadvisedly with my lips, God forbid, not that we should not pay regard unto our dear friends and relatives, and to all that the Lord has commanded, but there is something very special and particular in a person's way and manner, and as I give out this word as a text this afternoon I feel the import of it in my own life and experience.

In the first place we would notice that this prayer is directed to the Lord, He alone who can uphold Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps. It is a great favour to be enabled with singleness of eye to look unto the Lord for this special keeping and protection, and leading and guidance. I feel, my friends, that this is a particular part of one's profession that is really necessitous having an interest in the finished work of Christ. In other words, it cannot be disconnected, it is adjoined: and those who are regenerated by divine grace, and who desire to be prompted and influenced by the holy filial fear of God, that will be their prayer and their object that they might be favoured and privileged to walk tenderly in His fear, and to be preserved from all evil: and not only the evil that abounds outwardly, but inward evils of the heart. That is to say, they might not have pre-eminence.

Now there are three things, my friends, that are adjoined to the text, the first is, the prayer to be upheld, and seek to be held on. You and I need to be held up, sustained by God's grace: and we need to be held on that we might be enabled to endure to the end. In a sense we all will have to endure to the end as long as we are in the body, but my friends, the important factor is this, to be graciously upheld to the end. I feel it is a subject that does cause great concern at times in a poor sinner's heart, because they read, and there is an appropriation of what they read, it is they that endure to the end that shall be saved. Now there are particular paths of experience that you and I are brought into where we need special grace to enable us to hold on and hold out. Some of my dear friends here in their latter-day experience know this to be true.

The second point is this we need to be held down. Now to clarify this statement, I mean in this particular way, we need the ballast; the Lord deems it necessary and right that we should be ballasted well that we should be kept in our proper place.

Now in the next place, there are one or two influences that pervade in one's heart and experience for this prayer to be issuing forth from the heart in sincerity and truth and to see and understand in some measure as taught we trust by the Holy Spirit. Not that the Holy Spirit is the author of sin, God forbid, but realising our many infirmities and shortcomings,

and our desperately wicked hearts in league not only with Satan, but the world with all its allurements and attractions, that is the path in which we need to be held up by distinguishing grace. In connection with this is our weakness, our impotency and our inability to do good.

The third point is this, as with the Psalmist, he was surrounded with perils and dangers, he was surrounded with enemies. Now my dear friends, we may not of course walk in the same similitude as the Psalmist whereby we are surrounded by outward enemies, but there are enemies without and within of a different nature and character. And how true it is that so often we do not see the snare before we feel the smart. We may as it were, get entangled in something before we realise it. Now it is not only those that fear God that are kept tender there that breathe such a prayer as this is ; for "the burnt child dreads the fire." That is to say, if you have been the subject of enticement, entanglement in various things, and you have smarted under it and for it, you now by the help and grace of God will desire to proceed carefully and prayerfully along life's journey. Now in every walk of life there are perils and dangers seen and unseen, not only the perils and dangers of Britain's roads, but those hidden snares, the wiles of the enemy in league with our own heart. Now the Psalmist said, "Hold up my goings." Now I feel the correct interpretation of this text is, my whole person, my whole being. Now the heart is the centre, or pivot, of the affections, and mind, and motives in life. And I would speak correctly on this point, before one's feet may slip there is something that goes on in the heart prior to the slipping of the feet, there is something that draws away from Jesus Christ. There are many things that draw away from Him. He is the centre, and the circumference, and the circle of all true happiness and peace. Now this is a prayer in the heart of one who is seeking to be preserved from backsliding. We have to mourn, we have to lament so often our hearts and minds wander from the object of our love. And if the Lord were to deal with us according to our just deserts in respect to our inward falls we should be cut off. But in His mercy, He corrects; He chastens, and He is pleased to overrule these provocations in order to bring the soul to confession and repentance of an evangelical nature and character, and also to need the precious atonement of Christ to be applied, so that a measure of restoration may be afforded. " Hold up my goings in Thy paths." There is something very significant here, "Thy paths." Not only paths which are in conformity with the Word of God, but the paths the Lord has decreed and appointed for each of us to walk in in the path of divine providence. You see there is a path appointed of God. We each have our own paths to walk; we are each dependant upon God to be upheld and to be sustained.

Now in the first place in regard to the paths, it is not written in the singular, there is more than one. It is the path of prayer, "Casting all your care upon Him" to prove the blessedness of the other, "for He careth for you." Now if we dissect things we find in the dissection that often there is a departing away in some measure inwardly from God, and His paths are neglected, the path of prayer. Do we always obey the dictates of the Spirit, the whispers of the Spirit, the motions of the Spirit within prompting us to secret prayer? What is the

answer? We would, but how very short, and how very guilty often we come in respect to this matter. Now the departing away of an inward character can be traced to the departing from the throne of grace. I have lived to prove this, dear friends, and no doubt many of you will endorse the same, that is, that we need the path of tribulation to be sanctified to us to teach us, prompt us, and influence us to pray by the inditing of the Spirit. Perhaps some of you may be very deep in the path of tribulation, and you may feel prayerless. And yet on the other hand it is the way the Lord has appointed and decreed that there should be a gracious revival, and a gracious renewing to bring His child back to the throne of grace.

I want to speak in all affection and kindness, but have you departed any of you from the throne of grace? Are you as warm now in the things of God as you were in the days of your espousals unto Christ when you ran after Him in the wilderness? O we do know, (do we not) and the word has tried me at times. "I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love. Be zealous therefore and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." O I believe that with some of the children of God the Spirit of God shews them, reveals to them that they have wandered a little out of the path, and they long to get back. Yes, long to get back, to be favoured to hold communion and fellowship with the Lord.

Now actually I feel this word is a warning, it is like a red light. We do appreciate naturally a red light to shew us there is danger ahead. Now I want to speak prudently and discreetly on this point, but sometimes you know if there is a spirit within us sees the danger, sees the rocks – you know when there are rocks and it seems as though we are making toward them, instead of running away from them, we go toward them, but the Lord in His tender mercy is pleased to intervene.

Now there is another aspect of this text that is with regard to true seekers after the truth, after Christ, concerning false lights. There are many false lights in the professing world the Scripture tells us, and we are living in those days, false Christs shall arise whereby they deceive and delude many, they are drawn away. We do need to beware of false lights, and to have that essential light, which is Christ, not only to shine, but also to follow. False lights will lead into danger, and into disaster if not overruled by the Lord. Wrong sentiments, many are carried away with, and that which attracts them whereby those wrong sentiments are entered is because of false lights, something allures and attracts the flesh, something that is more palatable. Now this is a special word, and I do feel that not only we who are older, but our dear young people need to be preserved from following false lights, and that they may be enabled by God's grace to endorse this prayer.

I have seen this prayer in various houses that I have been in, when I have looked at it there have been special occasions when I have felt, 'Well now, that is exactly fitting and appropriate in my case, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths." - the path of prayer, the path of duty so that that duty is not a load. That of course has to do not only with practical things in respect to every day life, but in regard to divine worship. Let not duty seem a load. Here is

another point, that is, concerning our continuing in the means of grace, private and public. Now you will appreciate this point, that if there is no private worship, and our profession is just merely of an outward nature and character, there is something yet to be done in your heart. I want to speak kindly yet faithfully on this point, we do not want a pharisaical religion which is content to have just the outward worship in an orthodox manner, it is the inner part that exercises the child of grace as well as the outward. False guides we read of in the Word of God, they were entire strangers to the plague of their own heart, they did not realise they were unclean there, therefore they concentrated on the outside alone. And it is commendable, it is right in its place, and I believe where the work of grace is begun in a person's heart there will be an attending to the outside as well as the inside. This is one of the things we would discern and distinguish, that is, to have some outward observation of it, by discerning that certain people are wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, because there will be a difference in their deportment, in their manners, and in many other things.

"Hold up my goings in Thy paths." We need to be held up in the church of God, my friends, and among the people of God, that we bring no dishonour upon the name of Christ, and upon His cause of truth, that we bring no reproach; to be favoured to walk humbly with our God, tenderly, and in a genuine way and manner. Oh yes, in a genuine way and manner. Now I am not suggesting that any of you are not genuine, the Lord knows in respect to every one of us, He has cognizance to everything regarding us.

There is another point since I have before me some sorely tried and afflicted friends. I do sympathise with you when you do not know perhaps how to continue in the path the Lord has placed you in, the things sometimes are very distressing, very difficult, and you seem to come to the end of your patience, of your endurance. Yes, and you feel you positively cannot endure or entertain this any further, you come to the decision where you are ready to lay everything down, and your physical and mental condition is such that it might be impaired by these afflictions and trials you are called to walk in. Now you are the soul that will endorse this prayer heartily. "O that I might be held up!" How does the Lord hold up? By one or two methods. He is not always pleased to speak especially, I know it does please Him to speak a word at times that is appropriate to the case, and perhaps prior to entering into something particular. I have in mind at the moment the promise the Lord gave unto the apostle when he had the thorn in the flesh. Some of you may have a thorn in the flesh, it may be something secret, or it may be something that is open, visible to everyone; it is a thorn in the flesh, it is something you would not have, and something perhaps you are praying that the Lord would remove, but instead of removing it, it is retained. But it is not just merely the word, but the influence that pervades with it and in it, "My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Now you walk a path poor soul, where you will be dependent upon that grace that is in the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost in One Person. A path in dependence upon Him. Now there is a gracious effect that ensues as one is enabled to seek to the Lord that He would hold them up. The hymn writer suggests this, which is true, "He

lends an unseen hand, and gives a secret prop.” You do not see anything, you do not perceive anything often, but you are held up and on. Now my dear friends, in these days of stress and strain, of sorrow, trial, and difficulty, it is a great mercy to be sustained, spiritually maintained, and of course providentially too. We cannot disconnect the two. Then in your business commitments and anxieties for some of you, it is the same prayer, it is, “Hold up my goings in Thy paths.” I appreciate the difficulties that some of you are confronted with, probably more so than when we were in business. It is very difficult today for those who desire to fear God to conduct business correctly now there are so many regulations that are formulated even by government, it does not matter what government is in there are all these regulations, and we are expected to abide by them, to be truthful in assertions that we make, whether verbal or written. I believe it not only causes anxiety sometimes, but you are brought to a point, how can I sign this, and put this down, and sin this great sin against God? O it is difficult. Well now, may the Lord especially keep and preserve you if there be any in this category, the Lord knows. As you are helped, prayerfully helped, be honest, strictly honest. You may have to suffer from the hand of your master, or if you are a master, or self-employed, you will find it very difficult, but I can assure you this, as you are preserved in morality, uprightness, and integrity, combined with the fear of God the Lord will see to it that your needs will be supplied, you know He has heaven and earth at His command, and He not only waits to answer prayer, my friends, but the cattle upon a thousand hills belong to Him, and all the gold and silver in the world are His.

“Hold up my goings in Thy paths.” Yes, we need to be held up in our families by divine grace, not in self-importance, God forbid, but in love and affection, in benevolence and in prayer.

“Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” Now there is a particular path, and I feel the Scripture will warrant me to say this, unsanctified prosperity is a very slippery path. I believe we have reference to this in the whole of the Psalm that Asaph wrote, whereby he said his feet had almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped. Why? - Because he was envious at the prosperity of the wicked. Now I am going to say this, and I believe this is relevant, perhaps some of you may be a little envious sometimes at the prosperity of the godly. Of course I mean this in regard to secular things especially, the poor soul that has to negotiate perhaps obstacles, and it seems at every turn the Lord overturns things, and so on, and he cannot make any headway. And that is how sometimes the soul feels inside, they see everyone in a better position spiritually than themselves, and they feel they are among the number ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. And these are some of the conflicts and exercises of living souls; these are some of the intricate paths, my friends.

Now not only do we need to be preserved in His fear in relation to our steps, but I may just for a moment kindly speak in connection with our tongues. Much damage is wrought by a slip of the tongue; there are inappropriate words and inappropriate looks.

My friends, we need to be directed to know how to speak. Not that I am suggesting that we should be held in legal bondage, God forbid. No, there is a perfect freedom that the Spirit of God is pleased to afford to His children at times specially when they are favoured recipients of the gospel of God's grace. It has a liberating effect; it does not lead to licentiousness, and one needs to be very careful, and we need also to be preserved from lending our ears to listen to anything that is contrary to God and godliness, because the listening to it will involve the person, wherein it not only goes into the inner recesses of the heart, but comes out of the lip, so that the whole person, the whole being, is included in this text, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." There is no doubt the Palmist had to in a special way and manner pray his way along day by day, especially when he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains, it was, "Lord, guide me, Lord be with me." His eyes were upon the Lord. He said, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth." He had proved it.

I must leave it, but may the text not leave you: may it drop into your heart and may it penetrate, may it abide, may it be something that will influence the rest of your days for the peace, comfort, and consolation of your soul. Amen.