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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 25 February 1923

1 CORINTHIANS 13 v 13

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;  
but the greatest of these is charity."

There is a terribleness, a searching, a fire in this chapter which, if we know, will have brought us to realise something of the vanity of all things that are not of God in us. All religiousness, all religious knowledge, all notional, historical faith, all appearances of love, all faith of a kind to move mountains, and all liberality, to such an extent as to strip yourself of everything, and then give your body to be burnt, prove a martyr and be nothing better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I say, if we realise this we shall believe that there is a terribleness in the chapter, a penetration, a stripping, a fire. Nothing will be left us but these three if we be real people, the children of the living God. "Faith, hope, charity". Not much, apparently, as compared with what is of no value. Paul's privileges as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as a scholar, as a man who had access to those in authority, to obtain authority from them; everything he had he counted but loss, dung, dross, that he might win Christ. It is a great, and solemn, weakening thing in the experience of it, to be searched, and tried, to have the religion you professed to have put under the searching light of God; to have the confidence you may boast tested by God, and the knowledge that you have, that you have acquired, also to be tested. But when you have been tested, what remains, if anything does remain, turns to great consolation. O a little a grain of real gold, is better than a ton of tinsel. May the Lord bring us through this chapter and fix us in the last verse, and grant that we may know what it is to have - when all things are stripped off - faith, hope, and charity, and to believe that when two of these three shall no more be needed, the third, which is greater than the others, shall remain.

"Now abideth faith" Where? Why, in the soul. Were you ever thankful that vital godliness has its seat, not in the brain, but in

the heart? and faith has its seat there. God gives it, creates it. Faith that brings a soul into contact with God, that gives a substance to things hoped for, that cleaves to a revealed Christ, that pleads His atoning work, that looks to, and hangs about, His justifying righteousness, that is always attended by love. "Faith that worketh by love". O sinner, when you cannot go to chapel, when you may not be able to bear the reading of the word of God, when you are on a dying bed, when your friends may not be able to speak to you, or you to them; when every outward thing, when every external accessory of religion shall be of no value to you, then, then, O then to have a grain of faith, what a wonderful blessing it will be. Faith has given to it by God a great office in the soul. If you speak of the doctrine of salvation, then you may say that that is absolute, it is settled. It was accomplished when Christ said - "It is finished". The sin of the land was removed in that day, and on the day when Christ rose, then a nation was born; all the people of God stood before Him complete, no sin attaching to one of them. No defilement, no deformity, nothing of death; they were just a saved, an absolutely saved people. That is true. No devil will ever invalidate that; no arminianism will ever weaken that. That is God's holy truth. But when you come to experience then you will find what Hart says to be true of faith, that although all is finished you will find there is much to endure. Then you will find the body of sin and death troubling you, as Paul did who, after having said - there is no condemnation - after speaking of liberty, and of the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirits of the children of God that they are the children of God - comes again into solemn exercise and trouble, and conflict, saying - "O wretched man that I am" Was the salvation he had boasted of undone? No. Were the people of God, himself included, come into danger? No. It was just an experimental religion of which he was treating, and when we find our souls brought into a conflict, then we shall find the blessedness of this - "Now abideth faith"; it wont give up; it cannot die, it will never be beaten. It has a victory before it. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith".

I would like, if enabled, to mention two or three particular things concerning this faith, and, first of all, if we have faith we shall find it to be an emptying, weakening grace in us. The friend of God, the friend of our souls, but a constant enemy to self-

righteousness, self-wisdom, self-strength, self-importance, and everything belonging to flesh and blood. The people of God are born, not of the will of man, nor of the flesh, but of God, and that that is born of God never will unite with that which is born of the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This true faith will draw a line between life and death, between professor and possessor, between the nominal Calvinist and the exercised people of the living God. And it will say, God is right, man is wrong. It will say to you, you are a poor, weak, ruined, helpless creature, but it wont leave you there. No, it wont leave you there. It will fix conviction of ruin in you, but it will tell you of a Saviour. See if your faith acts this way. Does it empty you, weaken you? Does it bear a testimony against sin in you? When anger rises, does faith tell you it is wrong? When hypocrisy shows its vile face, does faith in you say this is abominable? When worldliness would come and reign in you, does faith say this world is passing away, and the fashion of it is perishing? When you would rest short of the Lord Jesus, does faith say in your heart - "This is not your rest". Does it tell you of a rest that remaineth to the people of God? True faith will empty you. It is God's servant, it has this commission. This is part of its office, to bear testimony against all sin, and everything that will be of no value to a living soul. This faith will keep you restless till you find God's rest. It wont, as it moves in the power of God, leave you and allow you to rest short of God's rest. Tis a great rest that God has provided for His children and do you think He will give them a faith that will swoon them and put them to sleep short of this rest? I am sure I speak the truth of the experience of some of you who have never had that rest, that you are not easy, you cannot be easy - I pray you may not be easy - till you get this. This faith is against all reasonings about this and about that. You may be disposed by the tempter sometimes to say, well I have got that, and I have got that, and I have such and such feelings, but faith will say if they came from God they were good, but they were never intended to be your resting place. If you have faith and it is in exercise in the power of the Spirit, it will make you unrestful in your spirit until you rest in God's rest. His rest is right, spiritual. It is a rest in the Person and work of Christ revealed and sealed home on the heart. This faith again is a spirit of real confession before God. If you look into the Scriptures you will find

an abundance of proof of this, my statement. You will find, if you go to Ezra, to Nehemiah, to Daniel, and to all the Lord's people, whose words are recorded, there is confession, confession, confession. It is that blessed spirit that God gives to His people which enables them to follow Him in His word by Jeremiah - "Only acknowledge thine iniquity". Do you know what that means? Do you sometimes, perhaps, walk about your room, lie on your bed, move in your business, go out of your house, with just one thing in your spirit, and that is confession of your sins. They stand before you. You can say with the Psalmist - "My sin is ever before me". I am corrupt in my birth, corrupt in my nature, corrupt in my heart, and life; not before men, but before God. O this spirit wont leave you at liberty to fly away into a light and airy profession. It will keep you on the ground; it will keep you well in Hart's petition

Make us well our vileness know  
Keep us very, very low

Ah it is a great religion this, because, you may perceive, it honours God. It makes Him great. His holiness, O how wonderful; His justice, how feared; His greatness, how revered, when this spirit of faith is in exercise. And it is like as if it says, pointing out to you here and there, here is something contrary to God in you; here is a heart of unbelief; here are wandering thoughts; here is anger; here is malice; here is worldliness, here is infidelity. O the many things that will be pointed out as being in you contrary to the living God. Then, following this, you will find, as faith stands in the power of God, that it will go to another Person; it will go to the Lord Jesus. O what a sight, what a hearing for Daniel, after his confessions, after his mourning, to be told of Messiah; what a light in a dark place. And this, experimentally, means sweetness, and comfort; when the Eternal Spirit who has convinced of sin, and wrought this blessed faith, brings good news, this great good news from a far country, the good news of Christ. Christ's coming from His Father; Christ flying to the cross; Christ condescending to be buried; Christ rising from the dead and then ascending into heaven. Great good news this is. There is an ear in the soul that listens to it. There is an eye created in the soul that looks upon it. This is faith. Ah faith comes here. The city shall be built, the sinner

shall be built on this foundation; washed in the fountain of the Saviour's blood; clothed in the robe of His everlasting righteousness; sanctified by His grace and His love. The sinner, hearing of Messiah cut off, but not for His own sins, shall be brought faith to hope that He was cut off for the sins of a poor mourner. Now here you will find many a friend in the Scripture, many a friend. You will find one in him of whom I have just made mention, Daniel. You will find one in Ezra, and another in Nehemiah, and another in Ezekiel. Nay, all through the blessed Word of God, you will find believers who, mourning and confessing, have had brought to them the good news from a far country of the dear and ever blessed Lord Jesus Christ, so that hope was kindled, despair was prevented, distance from God removed, and the sinner no longer distant, but made nigh by the blood of Christ. This is to be our life my friends. When stripped of all good things that we would like to have, if blessed with faith, this abides. Sin will not kill it; the devil cannot destroy it; guilt cannot wholly make it ashamed, or move it from the throne of grace. Faith abides, abides in the place destined for it by God. The wounds of Christ are faith's resting place. The Person of Christ is faith's life and hope. The love of Christ is faith's nourishment, and sweetness, and this is the rest that faith in you wants, that it seeks. Now abides this faith.

You may, in reading Lamentations, find faith there. Yes, with all the sadness of that book, with the rivers of waters flowing down from the eyes of the prophet, you will find, if blessed with eyes to see, real faith, and how constantly that faith addresses itself to God. You will find that the same faith was in the Psalmist when he said - "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". The Scriptures do show this and faith does follow this, namely that God is the great end of faith, God in Christ. God, the God of salvation, the God of love, the God of forgiveness, the God who justifies the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. This, this is the faith that abides. Temptation is like a fire, and quickly burns a false faith. False faith will one day be like tow in the fire. Vain, puffing up knowledge, will wither and die, and go away when the hour of trial comes, and false charity will never stand the shake of sin. But O this real faith that goes to the blood of Christ. Perhaps sometimes you have lived for some hours, perhaps for a day, by that

fountain that Zechariah speaks of - "In that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness". What a place for faith to live at. Think of it, here is a sinner and there is faith in his heart taking him, so to speak, carrying him to this wondrous, this efficacious fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. And I may make another remark here. True faith is a waiting grace. Yes, it has waited for many years in some sinners for the moving of the water, for the healing of the soul. And it is such a friend of God in the sinner, and such a friend of the sinner as that it will not be moved from that posture of waiting, willingly. The devil may be permitted to drag it for a time, to depress it, and to declare there is no such a God as is sought unto, and waited for, but "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". If you have faith you will wait on God. "My soul wait thou only on God for my expectation is from Him." "He only is my rock and my salvation". And again, the Psalmist says - "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple." Some here may at times go back to good days, days of liberty, of peace with God, of walking with God; of living in and on the dear Redeemer, and they were better days than these. Now faith, that was so active and joyful then, acts in another manner now. Then there was a good deal of sense; feeling, comfortable feeling, attaching to faith. They walked hand in hand. Rich experience and a living faith walked hand in hand. Today, how does that same faith act in the souls of you who have that past experience? Is it not the way in which Daniel's faith acted? Lord, this poor Jerusalem is desolate; build it again. Now you cannot go to your own materials and say I will buttress this wall that is now ready to totter, bulging out so much, but you can say, do say, in the power of faith by the Holy Ghost, Lord, build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. That is how faith moves now. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning." So these particulars will always, more or less distinctly, attend this abiding faith.

Now there is another thing in faith, and that is, it is of a fighting character, and the people of God are exhorted to "Fight the good fight of faith", to "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus", to "Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." And

you will remember that on one occasion, after Christ had told His disciples of coming troubles, He said - "Let these sayings" - things He had taught them - "Let these sayings sink down into your ears for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men". When Christ is with us, we are strong, we are happy. When Christ talks to us, He so convinces us, there is such light, and life, and liberty, and sweetness, and power in what He says, as that we believe His every word. But what when He does not speak, when we have not His presence, when He seems to have been given up to the enemy, when He is delivered into the hands of men; when your experience is questioned, when everything seems going. What then? O, faith's fight is here. You will never, if you have received anything from the Lord, never willingly give it up. It may, it will be sometimes, apparently in the hand of the enemy, but you will try to hold it, and this is the fight of faith. You wont lightly give up any instruction you receive from God, any word that He ever spoke to your heart, any light He ever shed in your understanding, and any sweet impression He ever made by His love on your soul. "Fight the good fight of faith". Fight for the Lord's honour in your soul. Fight for His gracious word to your heart. Fight for His blessed promise, for His righteousness, and for the forgiveness of all sin. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called." "Thou therefore my son endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Hard thrusts at you, hard thrusts from the enemy, hard thrusts from indwelling sins, hard questions put to you by the tempter and by your own reason. Hard thoughts that arise in your heart against yourself because of your vileness, and your inconsistencies. Endure these things. How? Put on "the whole armour of God, wherewith ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand". And "above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6)

Faith in the bleeding Lamb  
O what a gift is this

It will not lightly give up; it will not.

Now one word more; faith is a pleading grace. Yes. O Lord, hearken; O Lord, do; O Lord defer not. This is faith's language.

"Make haste to help me." "Pluck Thy hand out of Thy bosom, even Thy right hand, and come and save me.". Make haste O God, make no tarrying. And what is the ground and the reason that a sinner has for preferring such requests? uttering such urgent appeals to the God of heaven? Why, you have got the answer that you need - not that I give, yet I will give it - it is the very Person and work of Jesus Christ. This, this is the ground and reason of all the urgent pleas and the fervent petitions with which faith goes to God sometimes. Faith has two wide scopes. First the wide scope of felt necessity, that runs often into providential things. Here there is a need, and there there is a trouble. Here there is a burden, there there is some rod laid on the back of a foolish child of God. Here there is indwelling sin; here there is poverty, unbelief, hardness of heart, and many things. Now faith has to do with all these. They are no part of faith, but faith has to do with them, and I will tell you one thing she will do. At times she will say to you, these troubles, these necessities that you have, that to you are so large, so portentous, so difficult, so impossible to you, these are nothing to Him with whom you have to do. Her scope will be that, going round about these things; she will travail about them, and that will be her language respecting them in your heart.

The second scope that faith has is greater immeasurably, namely the God of all grace. O Lord, hearken; O Lord, do; O Lord, defer not. There is plenty in Him and faith sees it, faith bears testimony to it. A full Christ for an empty sinner; an everlasting righteousness for one whose filthy rags sicken and depress him. A cleansing fountain for the polluted; omnipotence for the weak; light for the blind; life for the dead; goodness for the bad; heaven for hell. And faith gets a view of all these mercies, she sees them. Now dear friends is it not so with you, with your faith? With all your troubles faith will say, these are nothing to God. Then, led by the Spirit, and having these things revealed to her by the Spirit, she sees what a fullness there is in God, as we have it in the hymnbook

A fullness resides in Jesus our Head  
And ever abides to answer our need

Yea, the Scripture says - It pleased the Father that in Him all



fullness should dwell. All fullness, is as much as we need, and more than we can receive. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here is the scope of faith, and it abides. "Now abideth faith". It abides in the heart, it abides in God, it abides in His revelation, it abides in what He does, what He gives, and what He says.

Hope. Hope, that beautiful grace, that grace that looks out, that grace that has not to do with possession, but with expectation; that is expectation. That looks unto God the Object of hope, the ground of hope, the reason of hope, and the strength of hope. O, what a wonderful grace is the grace of hope. It said in the Psalmist when he was depressed - "Hope in God". When he had said to the Lord that he was in trouble, that he was dark, this said in him, "Hope in God". There is a ground. Not like the writing in the sand is, this is written on the heart when put there as a grace and gift of the Spirit. O it is a wonderful thing this; it will make your face shine some days. And if you have godly friends about you it will make you speak to them, it will make you say to them, O, I have got a hope in God. I hope He will be with me through this trouble, and that difficulty, and that He will be with me to the end, and that I shall then sing praises unto Him. This blessed grace, this cheerful grace, this sweet grace, this God-honouring grace; - for hope does honour Him, greatly honours Him - it says He is my expectation; My expectation is from Him. "Now", said the Psalmist, "Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee" "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". You depend on a friend, and most likely you will, by doing so, provoke God to remove that friend; at least to bring some disappointment to you. But if you depend on the Lord He is too good to let you down into disappointment. "The Christian's hope shall never fail". It may be sorely put to it; fail it cannot. The Christian's hope is founded in the blood of Christ, on the promises of God. The Christian's hope has eternal things in view and looks out for them. and as the Christian draws near to his journey's end sometimes the Holy Spirit makes his hope very, very strong, by giving him near views of the rest to which he is travelling. This abides. Natural disappointments come, temporal destructions come, many evils come, but this, fixed in God, abides.

Charity abides. Love. Love of God, love to God begotten of His love to you, love drawn out. This abides. It abides when God is absent, it abides in trouble, it abides when many contradictions come. Tis a great grace; it hangs about the cross; it follows the dear Redeemer; it looks for Him here and there. It goes out in a dark night of desertion crying to all about - "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" It says, I have treated Him basely, but I want Him; I want to tell Him how base I am, and how wickedly I have behaved myself, but O, I love Him. "Saw ye Him?" Tell Him I am sick of love if you see Him. Love will go to the Bible and search for something there, if haply here I might light on a promise, or meet with Christ. It goes sometimes into providential things, and longs to find the Lord there. O, what a grace this is. It is not offended. Love is not offended. It bears all things, endures all things, believes all things, does not behave itself in ways of vanity, is not easily puffed up. It is a wonderful grace. If you have it you have had something to bear, and you have borne it. Beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. This is the charity that abides.

"These three". You may say you have not much religion. Can you, do you sometimes, find yourselves led to look into your own hearts and find your Saviour there; and find these graces there. Faith in the bleeding Lamb, does that move you? Hope in His mercy, in His goodness, do you find that? And love that purifies the heart, love that wont listen to any evil or ill-report of Christ, is that there? If so, these abide. You need not trouble if you cannot find much else in you. These are enough. These are enough. You say, I want something more. What is it? If you want the God of these graces, then go on seeking Him and He will be found of you.

"The greatest of these is charity", because when faith gives way to open vision, and expires, so to speak, in that blessed, full, open vision of God; when hope sweetly dies in a full fruition, never, never to cease, then love shall still remain. Love shall go out in all the sweetness and the exercise of it to Him for ever and ever.

Well, how many of us can believe that we have faith; faith that empties, faith that is the friend of God, faith that looks to the Lord

Jesus, faith that is not put out, or put off, or turned aside at times by all the feeling of wickedness that is in the heart, but goes to Christ. Hope that expects, love that cleaves to, and follows after, the Lord. May the Lord show to us, if we have them, these blessed graces in our hearts. We may rejoice in possession of them if we possess them. The Lord rested in His works of creation, and He takes delight in His works of grace in the soul, and if He delights in His works of grace, then we may be thankful if those works of grace are in us, and these three are the main - Faith, hope, charity.

AMEN.