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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham  
on Sunday evening, 11th. January, 1925

Text: 1. Corinthians 16 v. 13

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith,  
quit you like men, be strong."

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The first words of the text were regarded this morning. Happy is the man who is not offended with the exhortation. Happy he who can receive an exhortation in the spirit in which it is given; who believes that God having a family, speaks to it; having a house, rules it; and the fear of His majesty moving in the heart, will always bring the spirit to bend, to seek to obey, to walk in the spirit of the truth, and if we here have that clean fear of God, of which we read in the psalms, this will be one certain effect, that our spirits will bend toward the exhortations. The promises are beautiful, acceptable, blessed; and very necessary (seeing we are such foolish creatures, and so apt to turn aside) are the exhortations, "Watch ye," and if you remember the points I endeavoured to bring before you this morning with respect to watchfulness, it will be for your spiritual health and growth. Watch respecting God; respecting His operations and other points.

Now this evening I would look at what follows - "Stand fast in the faith." May the Lord help me to do it in a right way, and you to receive what is said in a right spirit. To stand fast, is to be firm. To stand fast in the faith, is to be firm in the faith. Here several things open out to one's view. The first, is the faith, the second, is the standing in it, and the third, is the standing firm in it. Holding fast the form of sound words. The faith here, is the doctrine of faith. To "stand fast" in it, is to have the grace of faith in your heart; the grace of faith called into exercise by the operation of God within. You will never stand in the faith if you do not believe in the faith, but, if God has taught you the faith, given you the grace of faith to receive the word, the doctrine of faith, then your desire will be, not to be moved away from it; not to be, "children --- carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," but you will desire to hold fast and cleave to

what God has revealed in the Bible, and put in some measure into your hearts.

"Stand fast in the faith" of God, respecting God. He is first, and if He will help me to the end of my preaching days, I will endeavour always to put Him before you, as First. We are not the first:

"Thou art the ever-living God,  
Were all the nations dead."

What a solemn truth. "I am --- the First and the Last." "I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen." - "I AM THAT I AM: - this is My Name ---." The perfections of God, as made known in the Scriptures; as made known in a sinner's heart; as received by faith created in him; these perfections are just the very ground, the only ground, of our faith, and reason of our worship, - of our hope. God is great, and greatly to be feared, - greatly to be feared. One of the greatest sins of this day of religion, is the irreverence, the flippancy, with which men speak of God. He can never have been real to a person who speaks irreverently of Him. He is "the great and dreadful God." "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations?" Now may we believe this. God is, God is great, and vital knowledge of Him is not a sentiment, it is a reality; He is made real, and that Scripture expresses it, even in this point: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." God!... and if you have real faith, God will be great to you. You will sometimes see Him, and as you see Him, you will feel just what Daniel felt, when seeing Him he said his comeliness was turned in him into corruption, and he had no strength left. You will just feel that, and I say this, that you may know whether you believe in God. Has He been real and great, and dreadful to you. Hold fast the Being, the eternal uncaused Being, of God, - hold fast.

Stand fast in this: in His glorious presence, - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; in His unchangeableness, in the immutability of His Being, and therefore, of all His revealed perfections. The object of true faith, is this great God, "I AM THAT I AM" - incarnate, for Jesus Christ said, "Before Abraham was, I am." The eternal God! If anything will make you sober, fill you with terror as seen in the law; fill you with hope as revealed in the gospel, it is this -

that God is.

"Thou art the ever-living God,  
Were all the nations dead."

Nothing will make you believe in your nothingness like this; nothing will bring you to feel your absolute dependence like this, and nothing will fill you with a deeper awe, and move you with a more sincere reverence, and with a stronger desire to worship, than when you hold fast this - God is. I am glad that it is so, and has been made so to me more than once. You might well say some days, you do not know where there is a God as to your feelings, but whenever He draws near, then you know there is a God. No reasoning will convince; no arguments will bring this forth and fix it upon your spirit, but a manifestation, the light in which God dwells, coming in that bearable measure in which it does come to saints, will bring into your soul the solemn conviction that there is a God to whom you must give an account, before whom you must stand, either just or unjust; either holy or unholy; either fit for His presence, or fit to be banished from His presence. Religion.... Do you ever get tired of religion in which there is no God; religion with what may be called 'pretty sentiment' about Him; religion that does not humble you, crush you into nothingness, bring you into the dust of self-abasement; religion that does not make God great and Christ everything, first and last, Alpha and Omega? Well, it is a poor religion, and contains in it no evidence of a divine origin. "Stand fast." This is the leading, the first and the middle and the end and the bottom and the top and everything else of worship, of hope, of reverence, of holiness, - God is. My brethren, if we get at any time, a powerful sense of this, it will bring an awe into our spirits that will, for the moment, kill the flippancy and the irreverence of an unbelieving, depraved nature, and yet, our nature is against God. We are enemies to God and goodness; alienated from His life; turn aside from Him; say to Him, - we all do, - "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." Let us then, as many of us as believe in God, really, by the Holy Ghost, say each to the other - "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Hold this fast. Native infidelity contradicts it. Plausible theories of men contradict it, but always this remains, and eternally will remain: there is a God in heaven; there is a God-man in heaven who may be known with comfort and peace; there is a God-man there, who says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden," who there lives to intercede, - ever lives to intercede for all who come unto God by Him. A glorious Being who condescends to men, who says that His eye shall be on the place where He records His name, and His ear open to the prayer that is made in that place:

"This is the God we adore;  
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;  
Whose love is as large as His power,  
And neither knows measure nor end."

He weighs the path of the just. He deals out trouble, He hands out His mercies; He gives the convoy of His love, He directs in His infinite wisdom, all things in His power; He rules all things in His sovereignty; He acts continually with one and another, setting up one and putting down another. This is the God we adore, and one of the sweetest mercies you can have, is to fall flat before Him, adore Him and commit the keeping of your souls to Him in well doing. Remember there is a God. To Him we owe our being and our well-being, and yet against Him, notwithstanding His goodness, we sin naturally, that is, according to our depraved nature, not the nature God gave us. "Stand fast." "O ye Corinthians." ... As if Paul should say, 'You are wealthy, some of you; you are eloquent, or, you admire eloquence; you are turned aside. You have become split into parties. Iniquity has broken out, grievous sin has shown itself as reigning in some of you, you have turned aside; have become grievously irregular in your forms of worship, in your administration of the Lord's Supper. O you Corinthians, watch against the continuance and the prevalence of these things, and stand fast in that faith to which you were called, when God called you to be saints.' And O Christians in Galeed, whom God has called and made Christians, - made believers; who have at times slipped away from Him, and lapsed from exercise into sloth and sleepiness and indifference, O, as if the Lord should say, Awake! - it is high time that you awake - and arise from the dead, that Christ might give you light.' Watch against what is in you, and stand fast in the faith of God; in the faith of His Being, His Trinity, His perfections. You will get well through if you do this. He who by grace and faith can hold fast to the living God, as He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture, in the gospel, he will come well through. Though he may often wallow in some sins in his heart, happily one would hope not outwardly, he will come through; though he may turn aside into some irregular things,

he will be brought back and come through, for when God is the friend of a sinner all is well.

Hold fast in the next place to the revelation which God has made of His purpose. He has purposes. One would think, according to the general teaching of to-day, that God is without any purpose, and that He is just ruled and moves according to the disposition of men as they will allow Him or otherwise, but the Scriptures reveal another God. The god of the day is no better than Dagon. The god of the religious world to-day, I repeat, is no better than Dagon, but the God of the Scripture, the God whom some of us know and adore and cleave to is a God who has a purpose, and is immutable in that purpose. And what is that purpose? That purpose is, that His Only begotten Son should come forth from the eternal bosom of His Father and become incarnate. "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." That in this blessed Son incarnate, an innumerable company of sinners should be found; that they should be one with Him, purified, justified by Him; that they should have His name named on them; that the Holy Ghost should descend from Him to each one in due season and quicken and teach and justify; that that same Spirit should be in them as their protector, their guide, their teacher, leading them into all truth; that He should be in them as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; that that blessed Spirit's teaching, is a humbling teaching, bringing sobriety of mind, conviction of sin, sorrow for sin, repentance of sin, forsaking of sin; that that same Spirit should dwell in the people and be a fountain of waters; "a well of water springing up into everlasting life", and that He, responsible for them while here below, should just take them all, one by one to heaven; that the Son of God their Head and Lord, their Saviour and everything, should present them to His Father, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." One can say these things in a moment, but the working of them out, the experience of them you will find to be more or less a life long teaching, struggling to keep and hold fast. It is no easy thing to be a Christian, but, there is nothing easier in the world than to be a Christian! And the contradiction is explained thus: it is difficult, in the experience of every child of God. If a Christian is scarcely saved, - says Peter, "scarcely", - with difficulty to himself, with pain to himself, with grief and sorrow and many slips and falls, many broken bones, and many an aching heart, many a sorrowful tear; - if he be scarcely saved; and yet, O how

easy, as it is the blessed work of the Holy Ghost. Touches, leadings, guidings, helps from time to time, light flowing in, mercy made known, the blood of Christ applied. 'Tis all application, on that part, it is all application. Hold fast the purposes of God, and as these purposes centre in the Lord Jesus, it will be your experience that He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord." He will be to you again and again, as you can hold fast, this - "The chiefest among ten thousand", and you will say, 'This Eternal One, the very Son of God, the very Son of man, is my friend, my Beloved,' and O what a wonder it is to hold that.

Hold fast to His vicarious atonement; that Christ really saved, - that He really saved. O this is a mercy, that when He said, "It is finished," it was finished; that when sin was put away, it was put away so as never to appear again. "Payment", one writes, and we sing:

"Payment God cannot twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then again at mine."

Can you have any solid hope, apart from the atonement? Can you ever have real peace in your conscience, apart from the atonement? Can you ever have access to God and familiarity with Him, apart from this, the atonement? Can you ever hope to have prevalence with Him and to get an answer, to plead and argue with Him, and to say to Him, "I will not let Thee go", apart from the atonement? The door of hope, the ground and reason of prayer, you will find to be the atonement. When your faith pleads this, you then argue with God with an argument He cannot turn away from. You present to Him that which is infinitely pleasing to Him, and you present yourself, guilty, and weak and worthless, and yet acceptable to Him. Here it is, and here alone, that the "offering up of the Gentiles" is acceptable to God. Here it is that the prayers, the broken prayers, and the sighs, and the groans unutterable, of the people of God, ascend with acceptance; here it is that trading with heaven is profitable; here it is that God smiles and can deny the sinner nothing that is good for him and glorifying to the Trinity. Can you pray on this ground? It is good ground. It will neither let you sink, nor let your prayers fall and pass away unanswered. Hold fast by the blessed, perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Every new-born person desires to be perfect. The longer he lives, the more he finds himself imperfect,

and the more therefore he is tried by the outbursts of sin, by the manifestations of a deep of sin and iniquity in his nature, and so, without righteousness imputed, he is hopeless. Who can stand before the gaze of infinite purity and justice if there be no perfect righteousness? This is one of the most solid truths; one of the most condescending truths, one of the most penetrating truths, and in the end, comforting truths, of the blessed gospel of God, this righteousness, this spotless robe, - this spotless robe! Here is a sinner whose whole life is imperfection; whose best is stained and dyed with sin, whose all is nothing worth; and he comes, the Holy Ghost teaching him, he comes before God blameless. How can this be? The justice of God laid on him as a divine robe put on. That is to say, the perfect work and vicarious death of Jesus Christ, made known to the sinner as his acquittal, his righteousness, his justice, his standing before God blameless, spotless, innocent, pure.

Hold fast the wisdom of God. Christ is the wisdom of God, to show a sinner the way from hell to heaven. The way to walk with God. The way to commit his cares, and case, and troubles to God. The way to bring his necessities, his deep necessities, necessities in his soul, and necessities in providence, to bring them all to God. God will show again and again how to do this. Hold this wisdom fast, - hold it fast. Old nature will put in a claim often. This only needs a little common sense, it will say, and you, if you obey the voice of common sense, you will get through. Old nature does not die easily, and if sometimes he seems dead, there is a resurrection. The wisdom of God is Christ, and He alone can guide safely and bring well through.

Hold fast the power of God. Christ is the power of God. If the Lord has power to quicken the dead, and He has, has He not also power to keep alive, living? If He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and contrary to us, out of the way, nailing it to His cross, is He not able to bring that home to our consciences, and keep it there from time to time? And if He took away all sin when He died, is He not able to fulfil His promise - "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace"? And if He who rules the world which He made, still abides the Almighty, then He is able to give everything in providence that is needed, everything. O bring your nothingness, and bring your wants here. O bring your weakness and your defence-

lessness here; bring everything to this Mighty Redeemer. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Hold fast this, and dear friends, all the promises, hold fast. The promises made over to you; promises that God condescended to set upon your hearts with power, making them spirit and life in your conscience; making them a guide to you and a support. Why, the enemy will be always nibbling at them. You will never hold a promise in peace as long as the devil is allowed to come near you and dispute the matter. He will never let you alone if you have got God on your side, and never, never cease to speak against the promises that you have had from the Lord.

O this struggle to hold fast! 'How am I to hold fast?' a sinner may say, in his sense of weakness. I will tell you one way, and you will find it a way you walk often, and this is it. When the promise is disputed, or when your interest in it is disputed, or when the enemy says you never received it from the Lord, holding it fast, will be this - taking it with all your fears about it, to Him who gave it you, and asking Him if you did receive it, to confirm it; if you did not, to forgive you for thinking you did, and make it over to you. This, is holding it fast. To let it go, as if it were of no value, is a dreadful thing, and a child of God could not do that. It is too precious, too valuable to him, and too useful, to put it on that ground. He could not lightly let go what has been made over to him, and so sweet and useful to him. "Thou saidst" - one said to Him - "Thou saidst." If you can go to the Lord and say that to Him - 'Thou didst say, at least I thought, I felt that Thou didst,' and you can perhaps name to Him your condition when you felt it, tell Him what you were feeling, and fearing, and how empty, and foolish, and wicked, and ignorant, and feeble you felt, and that then to your surprise, the word came, - came in, dropped in, fell upon your spirit; was like a plaster of figs on a sore boil; like oil molifying, like the sweetness of God and the very power of God. Hold fast.

And hold fast also any rebuke, any correction that God may have spoken to you, and given you. Any instruction that may have come to your heart from time to time, hold fast. You have not done with the mercy when the first work has been accomplished by it. You have not finished with the need of an exhortation when it has had one gracious effect upon you; you have no more finished with that than you have



finished with a promise when you have had the first fruits of it. I did not know this years ago. I thought when the Lord fulfilled the promise He made over to me, (not that I consciously thought it, but I acted as if I thought it), that I had done with it, but I found that it is a living promise spoken by a Living God, and it lives to-day, lives in my heart to-day at times, and you will find, when God speaks to you an instruction, a promise or a rebuke, when the first fruits have been had, you have not done with it. There is a root of life in every promise that will bring forth fresh fruit; a root of life in every rebuke and instruction that will also bring forth fruit from time to time. Hold fast - "stand fast" in these things.

And now let us look by the mercy of God, at that grace by which we can "stand fast." It is the grace of faith, the faith of the operation of God, the faith which He gives. The thing held, is a nourishment to this faith, and the more you hold it, the more nourishment you get out of it, the more sweetness it yields you. Out of the strong temptations you have, your faith will grow, and you will get sweetness. Out of the heavy conflicts you go through, which kill you as it were, you will find honey. This living faith does several things. First, it honours God. The faith we read of in the Hebrews gave glory to God. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Your faith will just do that in measure, in your measure, it will give glory to God. It will believe Him against all devils, all temptations, all contradictions, all seeming impossibilities, - it will believe Him from time to time, and put Him in mind of the thing.

You learn by trading. You will gain by exercise and you will find the more you are brought to this point, - 'Now, I am a poor miserable creature in myself; Lord, I am always sinning, and this is no boast, it is shame, it is pain, it is weakness, I am a poor miserable failing creature, full of sin, always sinning, but here I am, save me, and bless me, and fulfil in me the word upon which Thou hast caused me to hope', this is standing. And that is one thing that faith will do in you, it will honour God. It was a wonderful honour that the faith of the apostle Paul put on God when knowing well that the ship must be broken to pieces, and hearing the murmuring of some on board, and the counsel of some to slay all the prisoners, O it was wonderful honour that he put upon

his God, when he said to them, - "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Brethren, if you can do that, you will honour God. That is standing fast. "Stand fast in the faith." "Stand fast" in God, in Christ, in the Spirit, in the power, in the love, in the faithfulness of God, in your conflicts.

Another thing that your faith will do, is this: - as you stand fast in the doctrine of faith, it will direct you to worship Him. Faith is, if I may put it so, faith is worship, that is, it goes out in worship. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Solemn and sweet is this worship. The attitude of a soul whenever faith is in exercise is the attitude of a worshipper. Your soul prostrates itself before God. You can unite with the church where the word is, "O come, let us worship, and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." How real is worship! How solemn is worship. You kneel in the family and there may be just the formality, and in the morning you may wish the prayer over quickly that you may get to your business, but in your business when faith is drawn out, you worship with acceptance. Faith will lead you to worship, and faith will be clear of all the irregularities that are rebuked in this epistle. It will make you worship God in spirit and in truth, and let me just draw your attention to that. Mind this thing - worship. I have said to you before now, that you can put the whole of vital religion into one word, and that word is "worship". If your spirit is prostrate, if your eye is on God in Christ, if your affections are fixed there, if you see unseen things, then I say you are right and are holding fast.

Another thing faith will do, is this: - it will tell you that no difficulties will stand in the way; no giants can keep you out of the land of promise; no giant devils, no giant sins, can keep you out of the land of promise. "Be of good courage," is the word repeatedly in the Scripture, to a feeble creature. "Be of good courage." Said the ten false men of the twelve spies, 'Why, they are all giants, and their cities are walled up to heaven, we shall never get in.' Said Caleb and Joshua, "We are well able - we are well able." Why? They did not say that there were no giants. They did not say there were no difficulties. They had seen them. Ah, but they saw God, and what are giants to Him - what are cities to Him? They saw God, and so Caleb said, 'Let us go up, we are able, for the Lord is with us.' (Num. 13 and 14). Now your faith will get hold

like that sometimes, and you will pursue the narrow path in that blessed way of believing. "Stand fast" in this way. O what a blessed way it is. The way of life; the way to peace; the way to heaven. Therefore brethren, may the Lord help us to walk in this Scripture, - "Stand fast in the faith."

"Stand fast in the faith" of the Spirit's gracious motions and work in the church. It is as if the Lord Jesus sent Him and made Him, as it were, responsible for the safe passage of the saints to heaven; responsible for their being made wise unto salvation, and responsible for their saving acquaintance with Christ. "He shall teach you all things." - "He will guide you into all truth." - "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall shew it unto you." This is the work of the Spirit. "Stand fast" in it. Old nature will speak against it. 'Am I always to be a poor dependent, and am I always to be an empty person unless filled out of Christ's fulness?' Yes. 'Am I to be ignorant in everything except He teach me?' Yes. Stand fast here. No knowledge that you can acquire will bring you into an acquaintance with Christ. You may get some acquaintance about Him, some knowledge about Him, but the Holy Ghost alone can give you the knowledge of Him in your heart, and make Him your life, and your strength, and your beauty. You cannot dispense with any person in the Trinity. If you use luscious names about Christ, without the Holy Ghost, they are only presumption. If you talk about the Father without the Holy Ghost, it is only a naked knowledge, but if this divine Spirit dwell in you, O you will know the Son and you will know the Father. "Stand fast in the faith" of the Holy Ghost, and thus it is, that an individual and a church will come to know that there is nothing good, out of God; that apart from Him, ruin, death, reign everywhere, - both ruin and death reign everywhere. Can you stand here? I believe every saint in sensible weakness, will come here sooner or later, and every true gospel church will come to the same place, and every true church will say, 'We stand in weakness, we go on in weakness, we live in weakness, but we live in power, in the power of God.' "Stand fast in the faith." Stand fast here my dear friends.

And now in conclusion, let me say one more word. "Stand fast" in the blessed hope of an entrance into the Kingdom of God. Undefined is the inheritance; reserved in heaven is the inheritance,

and preserved for that, are the saints. Into that, they are to enter one day. O what a day, - what a kingdom! "I appoint unto you a kingdom." - 'You who have continued with Me in the regeneration, to you I appoint a kingdom.' "A kingdom of immense delight." That is what is before us. Here, we are in the wilderness; here, we have trouble; here, there are dangers. As it were, an unknown land is before us, and we must go through it. An unknown land must be more or less a terror to all who pass through it. An unknown future is before us, but, this is remarkable - some here can say, that though with respect to their way to it, though they are in an unknown land, an unknown future, they know something about the end of this unknown future.... It is heaven to them! Yes, God has given heaven to faith. He has given bliss into the hand of faith, even as He has given Christ, and thus, faith holds it fast sometimes and says, "Yes, I to the end shall endure", - looks for it, as Paul did in a different measure, but with the same faith, - "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." It looks for it. And yet, the faith, - the hold of faith, - is relaxed at times, and faith itself seems to be decayed and ready to die. Then, irregularities come in, nature comes up, the carnal mind asserts itself and a variety of evils make themselves known. O, but still there is this God, who brings faith up again; nourishes, strengthens and confirms faith. And so, faith looks out; stands on the watch-tower and looks out, and expects to find the promise true, that, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." "Stand fast in the faith." Do not expect an easy way, but may the Lord help you to expect help in a difficult way, in a way of tribulation. He has promised peace, and may He give us grace to stand fast and hold to Him.

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