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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 14 January 1925

1 CORINTHIANS 16 v 13

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

It is a mercy to have a heart to receive the invitations and the exhortations of the Holy Scripture. It is a mercy to have faith to lead us to a proper reflection upon the goodness of God in giving directions as to the walk that every new born child of His desires to be found in. We are very far from being what we should be. This I may say to everyone who knows himself and his shortcomings. Everyone who realises what the Scripture description of a Christian is and then looks within and painfully realises how far short he is in respect of that description must feel, will feel, grieved, and especially those of us who have attained to some years in a profession and yet see that which wounds and grieves, namely, a barrenness where there should be, for the time, as Paul speaks to the Hebrews, fruitfulness. Ignorance where there should be knowledge; inability to receive where there should be digestion sufficiently strong to take strong meats. And the church of Christ is spoken to in this passage which we read on Lord's Day and have again before us this evening. It is individual, it is collective. It belongs to me, it belongs to you who fear God; it belongs to the body. Watch ye against the sleep of sin, against the slothfulness of a professing mind. Watch ye against indulging slumber and sleep of which we read concerning the ten virgins. It is a very solemn and very hurtful thing to be slumbering and sleeping when we should be watching. With regard to the covenant of grace, there is no danger to any person who is in it, but with regard to walking, and knowing, and enjoying, and standing fast, there is indeed much danger, and it is in this view of the matter that I would speak to you a little this evening upon that part of the text not touched on Lord's Day.

"Quit you like men, be strong." There are three stages in the church of God of His people's growth. There are little children,

little since new born babes; these have some knowledge; their sins are forgiven them; but, being babes, they are not accustomed to battle and they have not attained to any considerable knowledge of things. Thus apprehended by us it might be very helpful. Those of you who are born again but have not, as yet, attained to an experience of pardon, you are incapable of understanding some things which the forgiveness of sins and the exercises that will follow and the growth that you will have, will be capable of entering into. And the Apostle Paul speaks of children and says to them, now be not carried away by every wind of doctrine. Little children are very apt to be carried away; unstable, have not attained to that experience that would give them stability of mind in respect of divine things. They are like children literally, natural children, who, though they are growing, have but little knowledge, and Paul speaks of this when speaking of himself; he says, "When I was a child I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things." And some of you when you are older and have more knowledge of God and of Christ and of the Spirit, and of the doctrines of truth, will put away the childish things which now you entertain. You may think you know things and yet be ignorant of those things. You may think you understand, but until the pardon of sin is sealed upon your hearts, according to that word in the 1 John, you are indeed but little children in respect of knowledge. Now God help you to wait on Him, and this, as you may receive it and enter into it, may explain to you the instability of your minds respecting the things of God. May explain to you how you do not, cannot, at present enter into certain mysteries respecting God and His things. You may think you see them and yet you may be tossed about when a blustering wind of error, contradicting that very truth, comes against you. It makes a noise and blusters, and you lose your standing and position because you have not grown up into that very truth by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the contention about it may seem to you unnecessary. Let me give you an instance now. There is the doctrine of Christ's Person, Christ's eternal Person, the second Person in the Trinity, the Eternal Son of God. You may think you believe that, and in a way, you do, but if a wind comes against it, if one should say well it does not matter, it is not important; if only you believe in the divinity of Christ that is quite enough; unstable, and unknowing, not having been taught the truth as the truth is in Jesus respecting this point,

you are like a child, you are carried away, you do not understand. It is a solemn thing and may the Lord, if any of you are caught by any error of any sort respecting God and His truth, give you to realise that you are yet only children. That wont necessarily lead you to despair. It wont lead you, if the Lord is pleased to keep the enemy far enough off, it wont leave you to cast away everything you have. I do not intend by what I say, to say that to you. Hold fast, as God helps you, cleave to the throne of grace, pray for a manifestation of the Lord Jesus and of the forgiveness of sins. Ask the Lord to be kind to you in these things and lead you on into the truth according to His promise concerning the Holy Ghost. "He shall guide you into all truth". "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Do not give way. If the enemy says because you have not attained to such and such truth, therefore you know nothing; if he points out a child of God who is older and better instructed than you and says, now you see what God has done for him; you have not had that done for you, therefore you are wrong; conclude not that way, but as God helps you hold fast to what you have got. Beg that He will give you more. Seek the unction of His good Spirit and He will bring you off from this childhood in experience and make you a young man and you will be strong in knowing God. "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you" and you know the Father. (1 Epistle John chapter 2 see v 12 and 13) "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong" (v 14). "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning" (v 14), that is you have known Christ in a particular way as the Son of God. Now the Lord help us to look at this. Children should not say they are not children because they are not men. We grow by little and little. When I was young in the ways of God I thought I believed that Christ was the Son of God, but when a wind came against that I lost my footing and standing and was driven away for months and knew not whether I believed in the Son of God or knew anything aright by the Lord Jesus, and you may feel painfully at times tossed about in this matter, but as the Lord is with you He will settle you well in it as He did me, for He came and said in my heart, "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him", and that settled me and I have been settled ever since in that doctrine; not without conflict, but I have been settled, and you will get settled if God

settles you, and pray that He may. It is painful when children think they are not children and when God will do one solemn thing, namely leave a people as a rule. He gives them children to be their princes and babes to rule over them. Very solemn. May we all of us who fear Him always be children in one matter. The Apostle says, be children in malice, but in understanding be men. Be children in malice; entertain no harshness, no bitterness against any child of God or anybody. "In malice be children". Malice is a bitter thing, malice is an offence to God and an injury to him who entertains it in his heart. "Anger resteth in the bosom of a fool", and if you entertain malice and it rests there, then that is what you are. Be children in malice; in understanding be men.

When you look at this it may help you; it may show you just where you are, those of you who really are but children. It may show you I say just where you are in the things of God, and it is good for us to know where we are. It is a good thing to know just how much we know and how little we know so as that, by the mercy of the Holy Spirit, we may be directed to the throne of grace to ask Him who teacheth as none other can, to teach us. That will suit all of us who pray, to the very end: That which we see not teach Thou us. It will always suit us and respecting the teaching of the Spirit of the Person and the work of Christ, we shall need to pray that as long as we live; we know so little of Him. So little of His glory, the glory of His Person as united to the Father and the Spirit and the glory of His incarnation. We know so little of the glory of His work, that it suits us to pray continually, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"

Now a minister may sometimes say things that trouble little children. He may touch upon a profound thing which they cannot receive and then the enemy may say, you are not children at all if you cannot receive the teaching. But remember that the Apostle said to this very church "...I ... could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal I have fed you with milk, and not with meat" (1 Corinthians 3 v 1/2). And to the Hebrews he said milk is for children; strong meat for them "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5 v 13/14.) So the Lord help us, according to our state and age in

experience, to walk and pray and look to Him. Here the text says to the saints "Quit you like men" Quit yourselves properly, conduct yourselves as men not as children. Well, and what is this? What is it for a child of God, addressed as a child as John says in his first Epistle, addressing all to whom he was writing, little children, and how can these little children quit themselves, conduct themselves, like men? Let us look as we may be helped a little at this point. Manhood means maturity. It means understanding, stability, wisdom. Manhood means firmness. Stand fast is stand firm. Quit you like men, not tossed about by every wind of doctrine and the sleight of men that will be coming and blowing and blustering about you, but stand fast. And just as men who have some understanding and wisdom and discretion and firmness so act, so live as before God. Now if you come to experience and try to trace this out, perhaps it may, under God's blessing, be of some use to us. In manhood there is maturity. The body is full grown; it has reached its limit of strength; there is understanding, stability. Now when the people of God have been led on by the Holy Spirit into the truth, one truth, then another, then another; prayer given and prayer answered; truth opened and embraced by faith wrought in the heart; gracious communications from heaven, occasional communion with the Trinity; delight in the Lord Jesus as He has been revealed again and again, these things bring the subject of them to a state of manhood, maturity, "perfect", as the word is used sometimes. "As many as be perfect" - as many as be matured - walk according to this: "Quit you like men" It is not that men have no temptation, that they are not exposed to evil, that they are clear of all trouble, that they have not to walk now in a path of tribulation, but it means that when they are in such and such cases they are to walk according to the dealings of God and the matured state of their experience. It means that when the Lord has given something, some distinct blessing and caused a real growth in the soul, that that soul stands by it. You cannot give everything up today as you did 20 years ago, those of you who have had distinct dealings and communications. You may be tempted to doubt, you may all but lose your hold of some things, but this blessed state to which God has brought you will, in the Holy Ghost, assert itself if I may put it so, and you will be found, you will find yourself, saying to the Lord, Thou didst say. And O when you can get hold like that in the power of the Spirit, Thou didst say; when you can take a promise and present

it to Him who spoke it, put it into your heart with power and gave you some fulfilment of it; when you can take a truth about which you had been exercised and into which the Spirit led you, and speak of that before the Lord when you are tempted and tossed about in your soul's feelings; that is being enabled to quit yourself like a man. The enemy will have you give it all up. No. You may say, all these things are against me. You may say, I do not understand God's dealings. You may feel as if He is neither kind nor wise; and yet there will come up to the top - faith will bring it up, the Spirit strengthening and teaching it to do so - bring up to the top, before your very eyes, what God has said to you, what He has done in you and for you. Now I am sure that I am not speaking a strange language to all of you. You must know, do know, what it is to lay hold of God in respect of His things, things He has said to you, made over to you. Made them your own just as when Joshua put his foot down in the land of promise and here and there walked and stood and fought and conquered, that place was his. As God said "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you" (Joshua 1 v 3) It is yours. So when you have put your foot down here and there by the teaching, grace and unction and the sealing of the Spirit, you can, in a day of trouble and affliction, in the same gracious Spirit's power, stand; withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. God does not bring little children into some things when they are just in that stage, but when young men and men come into that blessed state then they find that their enemies are the power of darkness, with earth, the world, principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places, and they find also when they come before the Lord at times there is the enemy, the adversary and it is in these states and conflicts that their strength is tested and brought forth as the strength of a man and they are enabled to conduct themselves in that way. It may please God to say to a little child, or to one who has had a good many things from Him: "How long will it be ere ye believe Me?" But when He has wrought that spirit of faith that lays hold of Him in respect of what He has said and done in and for the person, then faith says, Thou didst say. Now you see this as it is illustrated in the case of the Apostle Paul when he was about to experience shipwreck with all with him in that ship. He said to them all "Be of good cheer". What was there to cheer them? "Be of good cheer" he said "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." As He said to me

I believe it will be. He quitted himself like a man, a man of God, a man in Christ, a heavenly man, not overcome by the flesh; a heavenly man strengthened by the Spirit and enabled to walk before the Lord in the spirit of faith. So you will find as you get matured in the things of God, this will be one matter that will be before you, you will be enabled to stand and hold your ground. It is spoken of in the Ephesians thus: The shield of faith whereby you will quench the fiery darts of the wicked. The shield of faith will be objected to the dreadful suggestions of the enemy and they will lose their force, they will lose their conquering power over you and you will be an overcomer, according to God's blessed word, "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of His testimony". There is one thing that may seem very strange in experience, but it is very true, that the clearer the teaching that a person receives, the more solemnly tried he may be in respect of that teaching. If you have had a clear revelation of the Lord Jesus, it is not at all improbable that you will get more temptation about that point than any other point that is less clear. And how is this? I think this is the reason; it is a two-fold reason. First, that God intends to prove the enemy a liar to you, and second that He intends that you shall see how He is able to make you stand against and resist and overcome all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Now here it may be another point of great and solemn interest to some of us. We may have now in our souls and in our circumstances some begun matters, some things started by the Lord, some promise that He is going to do us good, and we look for the fulfilment and the fulfilment may have started apparently and then stopped and here is a thing. The enemy wont be slack to say in you, well you were mistaken. And your mind, weakened it may be by the absence of God - for He may be absent from you for a time for a purpose - weakened by that you may be disposed to say I think it is so indeed, I have made a mistake, I took what was not given to me. But now faith will rise up in the power of the Holy Ghost and take that matter to the Lord. It is not as easy to throw things away as it might seem to some. It is impossible for one in whom the matter is and in whom His Word is, in whom is a begun matter, to give up. Tempted to do so, he is; disposed to do so he feels sometimes; but it is not an easy thing for him to do so, for God holds him. Greater is He that is in you than all that are against you. O but to hold fast is very solemn and very, very difficult. Hold fast to God when He seems as if He would shake you

off. Hold fast to a matter when He seems to have left it, and left you. This is by no means easy. "Quit you like men", behave as a man whom God has taught, with whom He has spoken, to whom He has been gracious, in whom He has revealed Himself. This is the point, and not an easy point. And yet I believe it is attainable; it must be else God would not have put it here. He never puts a thing in His blessed Word in an exhortation or anything else that is not possible to attainment. We may be far from the attainment, but others are brought to it. I wish we may be, I wish I may be brought to it.

"Stand fast in the faith". Now faith in this point does two things, to which let me draw your attention. First, it honours God. That is what you want to do. It honours God. It sets Him first, it sets Him above men who may oppose, above devils who may blaspheme, above providence that may be adverse and contradictory, above apparent impossibilities like Abraham's. Faith, it takes no notice of death; though death is on the promise it takes no notice of it so as to give way. It just honours God. "Giving glory to God" as the Apostle says in the Romans. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God". (Romans 4 v 20). O, if that be my aim, if that be your aim, it is good. You say, I can never reach it, but the Lord knows better, because He can do it, and it is His work; no-one else can do it, but He can bring this to pass in your soul's experience. Look at that point. Can you trust Him? Do you sometimes say, "What time I am afraid" - afraid of myself, afraid of sin, afraid of Satan, afraid of providence; what time I am afraid of my deceitful heart, my prayerless spirit, my unbelief - "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee". That gives glory to God. Ah you go home sometimes and see trouble and say I shall never get through it. Is not that foolishness? I have been that fool. You may see things coming and fear and tremble and all but run away. There is an enemy, there is a lion in the street, and I shall be devoured. O the unbelief. But there comes up, by the power of the Spirit, this blessed faith and it says, "I believe God". It honours God. And this will bring you into some practical knowledge of that word: "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, do all to the glory of God". It will bring you to it. And the other thing is this, you will lean on Him. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" (S of S 8 v 5). Who is this? A

poor weakling made strong, a trembling soul made strong, and mighty, according to that word in Daniel: "The people which know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits". I speak now to some who are exposed to trouble and yet matured. Little children do not know so much as to enable them to do exploits; that will come later. But here the word is: They "shall be strong and do exploits". They shall believe God, they shall lean on Him, they shall look to Him, they shall look to the fullness of Christ and draw from it; to the wisdom of Christ and trust it; to the power of Christ and lean on it, and to the blessed, exhaustless fullness of Christ and seek daily supplies from it. If you look to these two things in the whole of your course, you will find enough for you. God is enough. Yes, God is enough. And as you can lean on Him you will have enough support, quite enough. An arm of flesh could add nothing to your support. Human wisdom could add nothing to your guidance, and human fullness could only just be a broken cistern that could hold no water. But God is sufficient. What a great word that was that the Lord condescended to say to Abraham. "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me and be thou perfect". As if He should take the eyes of Abraham away from everything in this world, even as it were from the very promise, and say, set your eyes on Me. Walk before Me, nakedly weak in yourself, walk before Me, and that will do. "Be strong, quit you like men."

And here there are one or two things I would name before I conclude. This strength, this quitting yourselves like men, will show itself on your knees. Yes, the man who has strong grace will have strong lusts and strong temptations and strong bands, and strong deaths, and therefore he has only one thing to do, and that is, as God the Holy Ghost is in him, give himself unto prayer. These enemies they are too much for him; though he is a man in Christ they are too much for him, so he has to go to his Captain and ask Him to help and to fight his battles and to cover his head in the day of battle and to give him the protection of His omnipotence and the victory that faithfulness divine has made over to him. You will find that if the Lord is with you to help you to stand fast in the faith and to quit you like men, this will be one of the ways in which that quitting yourself so well will be made manifest, namely plying the throne of grace with requests, urging, pleading, arguing, wrestling, reminding God of what He has said, said to you. Reminding Him of a promise or promises

and of some communion and some liberty and some views which He gave you of Himself, all which may be contradicted, all which may seem to be vanishing and yet you cannot give them up. "Quit you like men". I do not know if any of you feel ashamed of yourselves at any time about this, but I am ashamed of myself for I do so give way to the enemy. What a foolish, what a wicked thing. And with this there will be some sweet exercise of faith which is called trust. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". And there you will come. Sink or swim now and again you will feel, here I am, I can lean upon God. And then another thing will come sometimes, and a beautiful thing it is for a man to do, a man in Christ. "Delight thyself also in the Lord." What a wonder of divine grace for one who has been brought on to come to this. He loses the world as it were, denies himself, leaves the world, and now he has one Object of delight. Wonder of grace this, is it not, that he can say he delights himself in the Lord, as the church did when in the Song she said: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste. "Delight thyself also in the Lord". And if you can do this you will give Him pleasure, because this sets Him up above the whole of creation. Here are the sons and here is the apple tree among them, better, higher, greater, fuller, more fruitful, more beautiful and glorious than the whole of creation. God the Son, His divine Person, and the Son of Man in union with that Person. Jesus Christ set up crucified, buried, raised again, ascended into heaven, there on His throne, and there interceding. This Person and thus His works, thus His achievements, thus His victories; this is fullness, and the soul is brought to delight in Him. And there are many other things that will come in and would be, it may be, useful if I could with strength and time and grace speak of them. "Be strong" Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men," with respect to all the things that honour God. And what things honour Him? His truth honours Him. What do men do with it? Trample it under foot. And what do heavenly men about the truth? Hold it in righteousness and love. That is what they do. You will find when God the Holy Ghost helps you in this matter and brings you to a gracious manhood in divine grace that the truth will be wonderfully blessed in your view and sweet to your taste and you may say, I had not these views of God and His truth when I was young. Indeed I was a foolish child; I thought as a child, I

spake as a child, I behaved as a child, but now I am older, by His mercy, I see things in another light, and I see the same things to be greater and better and sweeter than I ever saw them before. I taste them as I never tasted them before. And now what? "Buy the truth and sell it not" "Buy the truth and sell it not". I think sometimes in these my latter days of foolish things I said in earlier days. I used to think, and I have said sometimes, in those earlier days of mine, that we did not need doctrine; we only needed experience. I did not realise that doctrine is the ground and source of experience in the Holy Ghost and now I do see that and that is why I so frequently mention doctrine to you, because I know unless you have good doctrine in your heart revealed you will be weak in experience. Only as you know doctrine in the power of the Spirit can you have good experience. Little children have not much knowledge of doctrine and you will find that they are very wobbly; they are moved about hither and thither. But as they grow and are established, God is graciously pleased to make them understand doctrine. He makes them understand it; it fits them. The doctrine of Christ's Person fits them because they have no representative in heaven if He be not there. His blood fits them as they never knew it before, and His righteousness fits them as they never knew it in earlier days. And then they come to this, they have to stand fast to this, and the world, and I am afraid many who profess the truth, are impatient of the truth. They may say, we do not understand and we cannot think it is of all that importance that some say. If God teaches them they will see the vital importance of it and then they will say, Lord teach us the truth; Holy Spirit guide us into all truth.

Now my beloved friends, little children, wait on God. As He enables you, wait on Him and try, as well as you can, to forego all hasty judgements about truth and wait on God to reveal it in you. You may perhaps be deceived and think you know it; ask Him to teach it you. He will; if He gives you a teachable spirit He will honour it and teach you the truth. And those of you who are as young men and strong in the knowledge of God the Father, you have got to battle; you have to wage a warfare; you have the world and the flesh and the devil. Principalities, and powers, and wickedness in high places and rulers of the darkness of this world will be always opposing you.

Stand fast in the faith. And those who are men and have attained to this gracious maturity, God help such to walk in this word. "Quit you like men" Men are stable, men are firm, men have understanding of things, and so you may speak spiritually. There is a maturity, a stability, a firmness, a holding fast the faithful word when there is this attainment. May the Lord bring us to it, and I do believe that some of you will not think it needless that one should bring such things before you. We need them individually, we need them collectively. We are in evil days and the devil is very busy undermining, as far as the Lord allows him, and seeking to destroy the foundations. "Quit you like men". And may the blessed Spirit of Christ be in you and in me, and help us to walk according to this gracious exhortation.

AMEN.