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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 24 October 1926

1 TIMOTHY 6 v 12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on
eternal life, whereunto thou art also
called, and hast professed a good profession
before many witnesses

I would repeat to you the word I said this morning in speaking on this verse, namely, that faith enters into the whole sphere of the life of the child of God, the whole sphere of religion. God has left nothing out of it that pertains to His people. If we perceive this, what I am to say with regard to the object of faith, will be quite plain to you. What I have said concerning faith as to her object would be incomplete, in my judgment, if I omitted the precepts and exhortations and warnings and admonitions of holy Scripture. They do belong to the Lord's people. Speak of them in respect of the dead in trespasses and sins, and there is no relation between them; the dead knoweth not anything; but speak of them as belonging to the Lord's living family, His dear children, then there is a beauty in them, a divine beauty, a congruity, a naturalness. As it is beautiful, because natural, that a parent should rule his house, order his children, give them rules for living, so it is beautiful because spiritually natural that the Lord should order His house, govern it, and give His children rules by which to live, so that exhortations and precepts must be a part of that object of faith that the people of God have set before them in the Word of God, and O that we might have, more than in the past, and yet more and more, regard to holy Scripture. Conscience alone is not sufficient to guide us. ~~Preference~~ in our minds, this way or that, will not be a proper guide. What we prefer, what we should like, what we dislike, we are not to be guided by, but alone, as the Holy Spirit opens and applies them, the precepts. The ordering of the Word of God respecting spirit and will and body and conduct we have to regard. What a mercy it will be for us if we are enabled so to live as to say to Him in sincerity - "Order my steps in Thy Word." "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my

footsteps slip not". And this part of the Scripture relates to persons, that is people of God. Relates to them as heads of families, as wives, as children, as servants; relates to their conduct in business and shows them that they are to serve God therein. Relates to Churches, Pastors, Deacons, Members; gives orders as to how Pastors are to rule, how Deacons are to rule, how Members are to walk; everything relating to a gospel Church. The Word of God abundantly shows how we are to walk. Now my brethren this being so, is it not a matter for faith? You may at once perceive that without faith you can never properly enter into a precept, a warning, an admonition, an exhortation relating either to yourself personally or to your business, to your family or the church of the living God. Do we quarrel with the precepts? Not if we are gracious and in an exercised state. Do we wish some of them out of the way because they come right across the path we want to walk in? That shows an ungodly state. Take two or three precepts for one can only just mention these things. Take this now; it comes right to us respecting the most intimate, solemn, gracious, blessed exercise we can ever be engaged in, namely prayer. "Pray without ceasing". This is a matter for faith and does not mean kneel down all the day. It means, if I rightly understand it, it means by this the attitude, trend and bent and exercise of your mind and sometimes, if this is so, you may find yourself praying more as you are walking about or engaged in business than when on your knees. The form of prayer is good and ought never to be neglected, but O the spirit of prayer may come on you sovereignly in the night, in the day time, come sovereignly on you and you are aware of it. But then, when that is not so, what does the Scripture say: "Pray without ceasing". This is the Word of the living God and may we be enabled to attend to it, never to turn our faces away from it, because we find ourselves carnal, hard, dark, distant and indisposed to pray. Did you ever struggle against that indisposition? When a preference, perhaps for a book, a newspaper or for company not good, not spiritual, when a preference for these things has been felt in your mind, have you ever had grace to struggle against that preference? Faith will enter into a precept and see a beauty in it. "I" said the Psalmist "esteem the precepts of Thy mouth in all things to be right". God's precepts are in all things right. Do you find in your soul a desire to walk in all the precepts and ordinances of the Lord blameless? His service is not a weariness, but nature

says it is. Nature says it is a a weariness. I know you say it in your heart - perhaps not consciously to yourselves at times, but there it is - what a weariness is it. I wish I did not know this as I do - I know it to my shame and pain - but sometimes it is otherwise. "I will run in the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart". But faith says, now the precept is there; whatever your state of mind is there it is. The precept says this, it says that. Take a little of what I read just now. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.....". I beseech you not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think; but to think soberly as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12 verses 1 2 and 3) Now how do we regard such a word as that? One says, a child of God says, and says truly, I cannot do it; I am carnal, I am sold under sin; I cannot do it. Ask him if he wants it taken out of the way. Ask if he wishes it were not in the Scripture. Ask him if he would rather consult and indulge the old man than seek favour from God to walk according to the rule of the new man. Why he would tremble at the thought of its being taken out of the Word of God; he would not have it taken out of that. Faith looks at it and says I see a beauty in it, a blessedness, a desirability, and though I am weak and though I fail constantly, I would have that in its right place; whatever I may be I would have that in its right place.

Take this precept again - "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord". O to be squeezed between negligence and over anxiety into a proper activity and carefulness in your business. Where is the man that has been enabled to do this? Any man of God doing this rightly does it by faith. Then again, what is it in the Psalms? "Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face evermore". Are we stretching out for discoveries of God, the revelations of God by the Spirit? Are we stretching out our souls at times as thirsty souls saying: As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so pant our souls after Thee O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God. And O my careful brethren, what says the Word of God? "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you". How careful we are about many things. How

careful, according to God's Word, respecting what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. What care we have in these things. Now the Lord does not mean take no notice at all of your life, neglect your business; He does not mean that, but when things come upon you that you cannot well bear, when anxieties come in respect of your business that may be declining, come into your house respecting one whose health may be declining, and all that kind of thing, He says bring these cares to Me, cast them on Me. 'Tis enough that I am near; 'tis enough that I have made a promise to you. Cast your care on the Lord, seek discoveries of Him, seek to lean on His divine arm, to follow His heavenly guidance. Seek to be sustained in body and soul and spirit by Himself.

Then take the precept that respects a poor afflicted child of God. "My son", says Paul, "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him". There are two evils and blessed is the man who, by faith standing and acting in the power of God, gets in between them. One is "despise not the chastening of the Lord". O, lift not up your head - that is what it is - lift not up your horn, lift not up your own strength, and say we will bear this. And the other is, faint not. David said "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". Some of us have both despised and fainted and so we have broken through the precept and some serpent has bitten us. These, my brethren, are the words of the living God. But then there is an encouragement connected with them. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth". What a mercy it will be for our dear afflicted friends who have suffered serious and grievous bereavement if the Holy Spirit should enable them to obey that precept; cast the care of the future on Me; I love you; I love him whom I have taken away from you and I have taken him to heaven. Now let the widow trust in Me, the living God, and cast herself and her cares and her difficulties and her sorrows on Me. Blessed be God He is a good God, and He says I love My people and I chasten them therefore. Precepts respecting the church of the living God. A pastor is to be diligent and this, if he looks at it, will make him ashamed often. The deacons are to be well behaved according to the directions given to Timothy and the members of the church are to walk according to divine order. There is nothing left out of the

Scriptures that is good for us, either for a person fearing God, or for a church for the glory of God. Everything is ordered as Paul says to Timothy I have written these things unto thee so that if I tarry long thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the Church of the living God, which is the house of God, the ground and pillar of the truth. And now just one word to conclude this part namely that the grand object of faith includes all this as the Apostle shows in that Scripture which I have just quoted. He concludes thus: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, justified in the Spirit, preached unto the Gentiles, received up into glory", and everything centres there. The vine has sap to supply the branch with fruitfulness; the master has wisdom to guide the servant; the Lord has authority to order His people; the Spirit is sent to enable them and to make the biddings of God enablings in the souls of His people. Precepts are not natural, they are spiritual. They are not legal, they are spiritual and they come to free children. We are not children of the bond woman but of the free and being free children we have free words, free precepts and admonitions and ordinances and these all are for the children of the free woman. My brethren these things make up that, that, faith looks at. Faith trusts Him who is the Lord of life and glory. She trusts His power, she trusts His wisdom, she trusts His faithfulness. Now I have occupied a good deal of time in showing the blessed objects of faith; something to fight for, something to reach after and to experience more and more of the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now, as enabled, I will enter upon the fight. I can say very little about it but there it is; we have to fight. Christians are called, says Hart, as we see, not to play, nor sleep, but fight, and blessed is the man of God who is enabled to gird his sword on; to put on the whole armour of God that he may withstand the wiles of the devil, that he may withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. The enemies are three, the world, the flesh and the devil. The world, first, because the child of God is called out of it and it opposes him. You could not, with faith in exercise, walk with an unbeliever. You may have to deal with him, he may be in your house, he may sit at table with you, he may be amiable in his disposition, pleasant to you naturally, he may have that, that attracts you, and

there may be a similarity of disposition, and of possessions and of acquirements, but when you come to that, that concerns your soul, that concerns God, that concerns eternity, you wont be able to walk with him. And this is what the Lord says, I came not to send peace on the earth but a sword. Yea, a fire, to kindle a fire, and what will I if it be already kindled. So a father is against the son and the son against the father; the relationships in life are interfered with; not broken but interfered with. Living faith wont let you live with the world. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil of the world". "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me". This is very very close; it has cut some of us indeed; it is like a knife that divides, a sword that cuts asunder, a fire that burns some ties and faith has to struggle this way. It cannot be God and the world. It is very solemn to be separated; you may be separated from friends and you have to be separated from professors. The Apostle Paul unites Demas with himself in one Epistle - and Demas and my fellow labourers with others; he greets you with me. In another Epistle he says Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world. If any of us have to come into the solemn experience of having the world very near to us, of having the world not only in us but very near to us in relationships we shall find it solemn indeed to walk according to faith, but you will have to fight. It is fight the good fight of faith; struggle against these things. Everyone who tries, like Jehoshaphat to unite himself, to be in affinity with an improper way, with the world, he will find that God breaks his ships, breaks up his union and shows His disapproval of what has been done. You will never unite Christ with the world. The religious world, so called, is trying to do it. You will never be able; the church of God will never really try. Individuals may try but you will never, never succeed. Fight against the world; worldly interests will have to go; wordly pleasures will have to be relinquished where faith is. "Fight the good fight of faith". When this world stands between you and God it will have to go. When some pleasure stands between you and the Lord it will have to go. When something interferes with you seeking Him, that something will have to go. "Fight the good fight of faith" respecting the world. The Apostle shows how this is done and it is a very sweet way of finding yourself separated from, and overcoming, the world. He says "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross

of our Lord Jesus Christ". That made him a good man, a Christian; that made him godly. Then the effect was this: "By whom" - by Christ crucified - "the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world". Separated from it; clean cut away from it. O, my brethren, if you try to drag the world in, you will find yourself wrong; you will find yourself in a strange case and a dry land. John says "This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith". This points to divine truth. Errors and heresies in the world abound. Now that that overcomes them is faith in the Lord Jesus. If you have real faith moving in your hearts after Him, seeking to bring supplies in out of His fulness, then you will find there is a struggle, but it will overcome.

The second enemy is the flesh and this is very close. The Lord has put it thus - If a man take not up his cross, deny himself and follow Christ, he cannot be Christ's disciple. Very striking is that passage in the gospel according to John, Christ's remarks when some said that there were certain Greeks who said "We would see Jesus". Instead of Christ saying, bring them to Me, He said Verily, verily I say unto you the hour is coming when the Son of Man shall be glorified. But how? A corn of wheat except it die abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that will lose his life shall save it; he that hateth his life will love it. What a solemn thing. There is the old man that loves life and that has to be lost, hated, departed from. Now this is a thing that all God's people have an acquaintance with, for the flesh dislikes the way, unbelief opposes faith, enmity opposes love, despair opposes hope, a worldly spirit opposes spirituality of mind, and the people of God have all those lusts and evils in their nature and so it is a struggle, a fight. There are two things always in a fight. The first is that the fighter aims at the destruction of his enemy. And the second is that he aims at obtaining something. Now if you have faith, that aims at the destruction of the old man, and the old man working aims at the destruction of faith and you will never get these two to be friendly; they are opposed in nature; they are opposed in aim; they are opposed in their ends, and you cannot serve them both. As you cannot reconcile them so neither can you serve them. "No man can serve two masters". You take two masters who have opposition each to the other, now no single man can serve these two. Their commands are different,

their rules are different, opposed to each other, and so "either he will hate the one and love the other, or despise the one and cleave to the other". Faith wont serve the devil, wont serve the world, cannot serve evil. Then there is a labour, a struggle, a fight. "Fight the good fight of faith". If we have an aim for God, a desire, a design to reach Him, then, if I may so express it, we shall have to fight every inch of the way. No easy business is this; real religion is in an enemy's land and its journey is to the land of its own, home, its native land. It wants to breathe that pure air; it wants to see and know and love and embrace its blessed Author, and there is in the flesh an opposition to this. Why this strictness? Why these exercises? Why this sorrow? Why this trouble? Why do we stand, says Paul, in jeopardy every hour? O, says faith, I am after God. Says the pilgrim I want to reach the blessed land. The enemy says there is no such place, no such place. Now faith cannot believe and receive that, so she struggles after God, she labours to get at Him. "Let us labour to enter into that rest". Let us labour to enter into it, which means that faith struggles to reach Jesus Christ. Do you find this? O, the more you labour for this, the harder flesh will oppose you. The more you see in God and therefore struggle to get to Him, the more the flesh will oppose you. The more implicitly you believe in the Lord Jesus, the more violently sin and Satan in you will say there is no such thing as salvation. Fight, says the Apostle. Flee the things that are hurtful. Flee the hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction. Flee those things and follow after righteousness, follow after God, follow after faith and love and patience and meekness. This is what the soul wants and this is what it has to fight for. Do you find yourselves engaged in this or is religion easy to you? Is it just attending the services, reading, with some regularity, a chapter in the Bible, and kneeling down and there is an end of it? That is a poor religion. Reading the Bible is good, but it is a poor religion that has nothing more in it. Why, living faith looks beyond the world and sometimes says, I see a blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I see forgiveness of sins in the gospel, a righteousness for the ungodly in Jesus Christ. I see a fulness of grace more than I can hold, sufficiency for my needs, strength for my weakness, wisdom for my ignorance, goodness for my badness, fulness for my emptiness, life for my death; I see holiness for my corruption. And seeing these things faith says I must seek

them. And this seeking is expressed in the Psalms thus: My flesh and my heart panteth; I seek God early; there is no rest in me and no rest for me apart from Him. This is how faith struggles. When you realise emptiness, faith says, now go to that full supply. When you feel a fool, faith says, go to the wisdom of God; Christ is the wisdom of God. And when you feel sin rising and struggling for the mastery, faith will say, go to Him who got victory on the cross and who alone is able to give victory to your soul. And when you are perplexed faith will say, cast your burdens, your cares, and difficulties on the Lord. This is how the man of God fights. "Fight the good fight of faith". Sometimes this faith is attended with a very sweet confidence. An example of this we have in king Jehoshaphat. An innumerable host came against him and he said to God we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are up unto Thee. A prophet came to him and he said, now while you are with the Lord the Lord is with you; as long as you seek His blessed face. That is the effect of His power in you, and He is with you; now go in His strength. And Jehoshaphat believed. Believe in the Lord, said the prophet, and you shall prosper. Believe His word and you shall be established. And what did the king do? He had such a sweet persuasion in his soul that God would give him victory that he set singers to go before the army and to sing: Praise the Lord for His mercy endureth for ever. And I should expect that the king had in his soul such sweetness that the devil had no place, unbelief for the moment had no place, in him. His faith was stedfastly fixed on his good God and he looked for a victory. Have you had that? Have you ever felt and said to yourself I believe God will bring me through this; I believe He will fulfil His word in me. I believe He wont leave me nor forsake me. What a mercy it is if faith gets honour from God. The same king was the prey of carnal reason and unbelief later. He made a covenant with a wicked king and they built a fleet of ships and the affinity displeased God and He broke the ships and they never went to the place they were built for. And you will find if faith sinks, as it sank in Jehoshaphat, if it becomes inactive as it became inactive in him, that God will blow upon you in some way and will break some things so that you will know your foolishness; you will know what unbelief means.

Fight against carnal reason; reason and the gospel will never

agree. Reason was all right before the fall - I have no doubt of that - but it has never been right since, except as enlightened, and insofar as enlightened, by the Lord. Reason? There is nothing more unreasonable to a corrupted reason than vital religion. Nothing more unreasonable in this whole world than the Bible to a corrupted reason. Its doctrines, its God, its revelations, its truths, its vital truths, these, these are all most unreasonable to a corrupted reason. And that is how it is that a man of God says as the Psalmist did: "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law". He had the law but he could not see anything in it. Naturally you can see nothing in the Bible; statements that you cannot understand; doctrines that you cannot love; ways that you can never be reconciled to; providences that you must feel to be harsh according to corrupted reason. If you have got faith that will say, now this is right; these doctrines are right; this God is holy; His way is perfect. Your faith wont give way to Satan and to that wretched reason, that that Luther calls "that beast reason that has to be killed", and faith is the one to kill it. Faith in your heart will say this is right; His way is perfect; His way is perfect. I could not say it; you cannot say it; who can say that His way is perfect in taking away our friend John Paul so suddenly? Who can say by nature that His way is perfect in taking away one whose life appeared so necessary? Corrupted reason will never admire this. Faith will. Yes, faith can enable a widow and parents solemnly afflicted, can enable them to say, He is right. The Holy Ghost can so strengthen faith as that the whole bent of every feeling of nature, every tender affection of nature, will submit and the Lord alone reign. That is what faith will do against corrupted reason, and O, what a mighty maul this faith is on the head of rebellion. No wonder that the people of God tremble at the thought of rebellion after they have suffered from it. If you have ever dwelt in a dry land and have been brought out of it, you will say again and again Lord, dont let me rebel; dont let me get into that dry land again. Give me grace to humble myself under Thy mighty hand and to submit. Faith. Faith is that hand that stretches itself out to Him; that spirit that says: "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good".

Now may He graciously help us to remember this; the enemy to be fought is the flesh, the old man which is corrupt according to the

deceitful lusts, and it comes and struggles hard to have its way. You know it is called in one place the law of sin in our members. A law has authority; sin wants it, struggles to have it. A law must be supreme; sin wants to be. And how can it be prevented? By the Spirit strengthening faith and enabling faith to regard the precept and say, this is the way I must go. The Saviour went through trouble; He had conflict; He was opposed by nature. This is the way I would go. "Fight the good fight of faith" against corrupted reason and the whole of the old man, the whole of a broken law, the whole of a poor nature with that law, the law of sin I mean. Broken indeed it is and yet struggles to be the whole law and prevailing law in our members. God give us this blessed faith that wont let sin have its way, but says, let the Lord reign, let the earth tremble; let His Word be supreme; let His power be felt; let His mercy melt my soul. And this, this is how a sinner struggles on, struggles hard, and calls aloud on His Lord and Master and His Saviour. I must leave off now; may the Lord open this mystery, the mystery of iniquity struggling to have the mastery and the mystery of godliness in that living soul born of Him that struggles to get at Him.

AMEN.