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

1 TIMOTHY 6 v 12

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

When the serpent suggested an evil thought to Eve, saying "Hath God said?" he cast in a seed which quickly bore the fruit of disobedience. Adam consciously sinned and disobeyed. Unbelief is the fruit and that terrible thing, unbelief, is in everyone descended from fallen Adam. It dominates every sinful man, turns his thoughts from God, makes disobedience a principle, moves men to say unto God Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. It is a blinding, distracting, misguided spirit in men. It makes God and His things undesirable; the world and its things attractive. It defiles the heart; it misconceives concerning God; it says He is altogether such an one as ourselves; it takes the form of rebellion when it misjudges Him and says what human justice would not do God ought not to do; what human love would not do, what human affection would never dream of doing, surely God ought not to do. The rule is wrong, not God. Human reason in the fall has a most terrible astigmatism upon it and can form no right judgment of Him who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see. And even when God comes forth from that unapproachable light and dwells in flesh then this spirit wont have anything to do with Him. When the Son of God said I am the Son of God, unbelief said: Thou blasphemest. When He went about doing good, He could not please His enemies. They said He was moved even by the devil to cast out devils. Of all this we may disapprove, but do we know, do we feel, that the spirit that moved men so to speak against Him is in us? There is another principle in the children of God and that principle is called faith. This dominates them, this guides them, this talks to them about God, makes Him right in their judgment, good in their eyes, desirable to their affections. This faith then is the distinguishing mark between the living and the

dead, between the church and the world, and men will never manage, never succeed in getting the church and the world together. The difference is realised by the Lord's people and even felt by the world. It was a solemn word that God said to Adam, rather to the serpent. I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed, and that remains now. The Apostle, speaking to his son Timothy, advises and exhorts him to flee youthful lusts, foolish and hurtful; love of money; exhorts him to be content with such things as he has; tells him that the things against which he exhorts him drown men in destruction and perdition; tells him that the love of money is the root of all evil which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. The possession of sufficient money for the purpose of your daily life is one thing; the love of money which will make you want more than you have got and covet after that which God might have withheld from you, is another thing, and it is against this, the love of money, that the Holy Ghost by His servant Paul here speaks so strongly. "Which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows". "But thou O man of God". Is it not beautiful to be so addressed? If the Lord could, by a servant of His, so address us - "O men of God" - men of God would mean men born again, born of the Spirit; men blessed with the kindness and love of God appearing to them in the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Can a better thing be said of a man? "O man of God", born again, washed in the washing of regeneration, blessed with the Holy Ghost, favoured to possess faith. We are told to covet earnestly the best things. Dear friends, covet this, covet this title, "O man of God". It is said of some sometimes in obituaries, he, such and such a person, could be described as a man of the world. When we come to die if anyone should speak about us, may they say they were men of God. "O man of God" possessed of the divine nature and therefore escaping the corruption which is in the world through lust. O man of God flee these hurtful lusts. Flee from the love of money, flee from unbelief, flee from your enmity against God, flee these things that are hurtful; flee these things and follow after righteousness, the righteousness of God imputed, a righteous life by union with the living Vine. And godliness - a right way of living and worshipping; visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction; keeping yourself unspotted from the world. This is godliness. Faith in the

Son of God, love to the Person of Christ, patience in tribulation, meekness, a teachable spirit. Then "Fight the good fight of faith". The primary idea in the word "faith" is trust. Then it comes to a person who is trustworthy. "Fight the good fight of faith". Faith thus enters into the entire sphere of religion, vital religion. Every part and particle of God's religion in a person has this faith and the whole sphere of a believer's life, his inward life and his outward life, faith enters into. That is to say, every divine truth revealed in the Scripture and made known in the heart by the Holy Ghost belongs to faith. That is to say, faith looks at it, believes it, trusts it. Let us follow this a little, as enabled. God has revealed Himself in holy Scripture, His divine character, His perfections, His purposes; purposes of love. His vengeance, taking vengeance on them that obey not the gospel. His providence, wise, holy providence, pervading everything. These things - His law, His threatening in this law; eternity, the immortality of men; heaven for the godly and hell for the wicked; a judgment to come, the Assize set, the Judge on the throne, assembled worlds to receive their sentence - these things the Scriptures do reveal respecting God. If that is so then this is true that living faith finds an exercise, an Object, in Him, Ah, the true Object of faith from the beginning to the end is God. God in whatsoever way it has pleased Him to reveal Himself; in whatsoever way it pleases the Holy Spirit to make Him known in the heart. And this explains, and will explain to us it may be, the reason that there is, at times, what Isaiah speaks of, a trembling at the Word of God. You cannot believe in God really and by that have a reflection of His holiness and majesty on your heart, and not tremble. He is a terrible God. The terrible crystal is not so dazzling as His holiness, His justice, His majesty, His eternity, His wisdom, His omniscience, His omnipresence, and the exercise of faith on Him is a true and a profitable and a wholesome exercise. It seems perhaps to some a gloomy and forbidding kind of religion to put trembling into it, but remember who it is before whom you tremble; remember it is not a man. A beggar might tremble at the thought of being introduced to his king, of being taken out of the gutter into the palace, but even that would be a very small thing compared with this, a sinful man perceiving in his heart - how, he may not know at the moment - that there is a God in heaven, holy, holy, holy, eternal, just, unsullied in his justice, righteous in all His nature. No

wonder that the sinner trembles before such a Being, and this you have to fight for; to maintain this fight, this good fight. Let there be no lowering of the standard, no belittling of the majesty of God. And if the language of unbelief in the heart says, why is this and why is that? and why, if God is, and if He is what the Scriptures say He is, why does He permit such and such things? faith will say: "He giveth no account of any of His matters". He will be trusted. You may have things in your person, things in your house, things in your business and things about you in your friends which you have no means of properly understanding and against which something in your heart murmurs, but rightly received - that is to say held by faith - those things you will fight for. You will say He is good, He is right, He cannot make a mistake, for He is God only wise. He cannot be wrong because He is God only just. And you will look this way and fight for this truth. It was beyond the understanding of Abraham that God should come down to destroy cities but he came to this: Shall not God, the Judge of the earth do right? and you will come here if you have real faith in Him. Faith will hold this as a divine truth, a principle never to be let go, that God cannot do wrong, and when it is applied to yourself and you are enabled to fight for this, it will be a stay to you. He cannot do wrong; whatever seems wrong only seems so with respect to Himself. Whatever is perplexing is only perplexing in us, not with respect to Himself. Whatever is crooked is so to us, not to Him. Whatever is dark is dark to us, not to Him, and faith will stick to this. And you may judge yourselves at times as to whether you have real faith. It will hang about Him in this particular. May the Holy Spirit more and more reveal to us the Being of God as that Being can be held and received and seen, even as He shows Himself in Christ. A just God there as well as anywhere else. Yea, and the Man Christ Jesus rules heaven and earth because He is God.

Secondly when it pleases God to reveal Himself in a sinner's heart as He reveals Himself in holy Scripture in the law, faith is exercised on that. It is not all legal; there is a spirituality, a divine moving in faith with respect to God's law. O, but the law tells me to do what I am unable to do. Quite true, but the conclusion is not what you may sometimes be tempted to arrive at. But why does He tell me ^{to} do what I am unable to do? He did not do that at all originally. When He told Adam to obey Adam had power to do it and we,

represented by him, had power also. God is right, and so long as He enables me to stand up and speak a word in His Name, I will try to make this out and try to defend it. God is right in His law, and if a man lives and dies contradicting this, the day is coming when he wont contradict it. Every mouth shall be stopped; all the world be guilty before God. His creatures ought to obey Him, to love Him and serve Him with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, and their neighbour to love as themselves. That is our duty. God demands this, claims it at our hands. His holy, just claim will never, never abate one jot or tittle. You must pay this debt of obedience either in your own person or in the person of a Surety. Now here the people of God find a conflict because there is an opposition to this in their fallen nature. But conscience, quickened and enlightened, and faith standing up and speaking for God, says though I am wrong, though I cannot do what He tells me to do and though I am condemned for my inability, He is right, He is right. This as a principle is lodged in every living conscience, in every spiritually enlightened understanding - God is right. And if you have not come to that yet, as God is your teacher you will come to it. You will maintain His honour as that honour is revealed in a broken law. Do not say you have no faith, and do not say you have no religion, if you can justify God in your own condemnation. If, when conscience ratifies the sentence of condemnation that passed on you by the law, that is connected with a feeling, solemn, terrible, but true, that He, in condemning you is a just God, do not say that you have no religion, but fight for this; hold this fast; keep this as a principle. As you can keep it it will keep you steady. As you can hold it it will keep your eyes on Himself and it will make Him great and glorious in your eyes and it will bring you to that which all the saints come to from time to time, to worship Him. But then there is something very very much more wonderful and beautiful to the saints in holy Scripture. God reveals Himself in His Son and His Son in holy Scripture is seen as being obedient unto death even the death of the cross, as perfecting for ever them whom He sanctified by suffering without the gate; as dying voluntarily for them, as rising again for them, as ascending into heaven for them and interceding there, ever prevailing. And this Jesus is the Object of faith. This Jesus, in these particulars, is made known to His people from time to time, and it is in this particular that they find themselves a good deal opposed by their own fallen nature, and yet

they are attracted to it as they have faith directed to it by the Spirit of God and here I may bring in that beautiful passage in the Ephesians where Paul says: By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God". And the gift of God in that passage clearly is faith. No-one disputes - if they believe at all in grace - No-one disputes that grace comes from God, but there may be a dispute, there is a dispute in many, as to the source of faith, but Paul says, this is of God; this is God's gift to you; you believing Ephesians have your faith from Him. That saves you from continuing to cry "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"; that brings you to lift up the Lord Jesus in your prayer, to mention Him in every petition, to speak to God about Him in all your requests. Faith in the bleeding Lamb; this wonderfully holds a sinner. The Spirit strengthens it; the Spirit who creates it, strengthens it. It wonderfully holds you; it will hold you as the Apostle speaks in the Hebrews: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace". In what condition? He tells us there that the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not open to His eye: but all things are naked to Him and open to His eye. Well, it is a solemn and heavy business to go to the throne of grace when your heart is dissected and your thoughts are opened to your own pained gaze and the wickedness of a fallen nature is discovered to you; it is a heavy business. But, says the Apostle "Let us come boldly". Why? Because the reason of the exhortation is infinitely greater than can be the discouragement. The discouragement is from sin; the encouragement is from the atonement. The discouragement is because a man feels himself corrupt; the encouragement is because there is a holy High Priest in heaven who, having shed His blood, has entered into heaven with it, there to appear in the presence of God for us. So sinner, when you look at yourself, you look at one who is finite and whose sins, therefore, though they be in a sense infinite as done against an infinite God, yet you look at that which is finite, and when faith turns your gaze, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus, it looks upon Him who is infinite; infinite in goodness, in merit, in mercy, in intercession, and who says "Come unto Me". Who says to Israel "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself".

Summing up all the accusations that go through that prophecy of Hosea, "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself". Therefore, says Israel, I am hopeless; I shall pine away - as the word in Ezekiel is; I shall pine away in my sins. And therefore, says the devil, there is no hope, and he says to some, rush out of the world unbidden. But, says the Spirit, "Come boldly". Though you are thus and thus, though so wicked, though so corrupt, "Come boldly to the throne of grace". Jesus is there; He is the glorious high throne from the beginning; His blood is there; His righteousness is there; His love is there; His merit is there. Therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Faith goes out in gracious actings on this, its proper Object, with regard to salvation and every believer will be shut up to this, as if God will draw the eye continually from time to time, distinctly draw it to this Object and say, in the spirit, "Look to Jesus kind as strong, mercy joined with power."

Another object is the Word of God, the blessed Word of God. In two particulars I will mention it. First in respect to the invitations of the gospel uttered by the Lord Jesus; written by holy men of old who were moved by the Holy Ghost to write them. Heaven and earth are not as certain, as solid, as are God's holy words. Heaven and earth shall pass away but the Word of God, never. Therefore when the Saviour looks to a character, a man who can say I am hungry for God, that blessed Saviour says "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink". He says "Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Enter into the trade, the honourable trade of begging; come without any money in your hand. He says "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden". Now these holy Scriptures are firm. "For ever O Lord Thy word is settled in heaven". There is only one Book on which your eye can fall, of which you can say, it is infallible, and it is this Book. Therefore, sinner, when your eye, the eye of your faith, lights on an invitation, remember whose word it is. The lip of truth can utter nothing but truth and the kindness of God appears in the invitations He issues. He sent His servants - when things were ready and the bidden Jews said they could not come - He sent His servants into the highways and He said to them go and bring in the poor, the maimed, the lame, the halt

and the blind, and compel them to come. And they object; the blind objects that he does not know the way and the ragged poor objects his rags; he is not fit to go. And the lame says, I cannot get there, and the maimed says, I am short of a limb. But, says the Lord, compel them to come in. Tell them how firm My word is; tell them how free My grace is; tell them that I will have these poor, ragged creatures, and beggars at My table. Tell them of my condescending love; that I have killed My sacrifices, that I have mingled My wine, that I have builded My house and My seven pillars. Tell them all these things so as that their objections shall melt away and they shall come in humble obedience. Invitations are beautiful. Consider who issues them; consider what they intend; consider the characters to whom they are sent, the poor, and the miserable and the prisoner, and the wretched, the debtor, the polluted, the unrighteous. Now faith will eye these things and sometimes you will say, lo glad I come. Lo blest Lamb, glad I come, and Thou shalt take me as I am. Nothing but sin have I to give; nothing but grace, nothing but love and mercy shall I receive.

Take next the promises; these are an object of faith. Promises. A promise has its strength from the character and the resources of the promiser. A parent may promise a great deal more than he is able to perform. He intended to perform all he said, but was not able. All the promises of God in Christ are yea and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us. (2 Cor.1 v 20) Everything He has said He is able to perform and He will perform. He is not a man that He should lie nor the son of man that He should repent, and when faith looks into a promise it sees more there than can be held by a sinner. It sees Him sometimes who has promised: "He is faithful that promised" And the Apostle tells us in the Hebrews that God has displayed a willingness in respect of His promises. God willing. He knew the shyness of unbelief, the power and the wickedness of unbelief, and so being willing He shows the heirs of promise the abundance of His goodness by adding an oath that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. See what God has given; see, poor sinner, what God has given. Have you a heart to go to Him? He says come to Me; He has given the heart. Have you poverty? He says come to Me; durable riches and righteousness are with Me. Have you

an ear to hear? He says Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors, for whoso findeth Me findeth life and shall obtain favour of the Lord. Promises respecting the difficulties as well as the interests of His people, the people of God. He says "I will guide thee with Mine eye". I do not know which way to go, says one. You go as well as you can by faith and ask Him to show you. "Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee". They respect the conflicts of the way, they respect temptations that the saints meet with, and God speaks to both of these things. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it". And with respect to the enemy He says "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes". I will rebuke the enemy and the avenger with My great and strong and sore sword; I will punish Leviathan that crooked serpent. Yea, directly, He says "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly".

Sometimes He gives His people particular promises to exercise them, solemn providences such as we lately have had here. Solemn providences that completely overturn all expectations and put an end to hopes, some hopes with respect to some people. Death comes and puts an end to some things. And if you reason about them what can you say? God leaves an old man to live, lie in bed; gives him happiness and sweet peace and anticipations, but he can do nothing naturally; just has to be looked after by his family. He takes away another in the prime of life, on whom some are dependent, and what shall we say? Reason about these things; reason will go to that bed and say why is this old man left? and go to that home and say why was that active and strong man suddenly cut down and taken away? And this reasoning will just leave you in confusion and weakness and shedding of tears of regret. O, but if faith comes forth, if the Holy Spirit who created faith strengthens it and says now look to God, depend on His wisdom; He cannot make a mistake; live on His goodness, it will meet all your needs; hang on His promise, it will never fail you; lean on His arm, He is almighty; "Trust in the Lord and lean not to your own understanding", this faith will purify the heart from rebellion and murmuring and reasoning; will purify the heart from all harsh

judgment of God and bring you to say: "It is the Lord". "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good;" Why? Says faith, "Because Thou didst it". "Because Thou didst it". And faith has a very direct action, namely this; it goes, as in the case of Job, it goes beyond the Sabians and the Chaldeans and the wind and the fire, and it does not see any of them; it is as if they did not exist, as if they had done nothing, as if they had not been near to Job nor his family nor his possessions, and it says: "The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD." And then, briefly, to conclude here, the object of faith is eternity, that is to say God has promised heaven and His people look for it. There is an expectation in hope. "Hope maketh not ashamed". Hope expects something that is not yet possessed; hope is for the future. Hope says I will bless Him. I believe He will bring me honourably through; I believe He will take me to heaven. Here is an object of faith. As some of us know faith has an eye that pierces the skies, that goes beyond time, looks to timeless things, timeless mercies, endless blessings, to the presence of God in heaven and the presence of the saints with Him in heaven, and she says sometimes, He will take me there. This faith is a living principle. What an awful, solemn, disappointment it would be to some here if they missed that place, but we shall not miss it. Where I am there shall My servant be; there shall My soldier be. He fought for My Name, he struggled to maintain My honour on his knees, he sought to love Me and own Me in every condition, in every providence, in every place and now where I am there shall my servant be. O what a prospect is it not? Faith looks on it, hopes for it, and says, God that cannot lie will bring me there. I have just set before you the object of faith in these particulars. Now the Apostle says to Timothy "Fight the good fight of faith", this good fight. But I must not enter into this now. Have we faith? Hast thou faith? O sinner, hast thou faith? This faith is called in the Holy Scripture the faith of God's operation, the faith of God's elect; precious faith. Hast thou this faith? If so, then fight. You are called to fight, not to play. Called to fight, not to sleep. Called to fight the enemies of God and your own soul. May the Lord give grace to do this. "Fight the good fight of faith".

AMEN.