

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Wednesday Evening
27th July 1932

Text 1 Timothy 6 verse 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.

How we come into the world, and how we shall go out of it, the dangers attending living, the snares and evils that present themselves, and catch men, even professors of religion, who following after snares, they fall into them. And pierce themselves through, with many darts of death, and fall into destruction, and perdition. And it were well for us to be persuaded, of the vanity of all things, that are created, on which naturally, we would like to feed, to depend on, and from which, we would fain derive satisfaction, which however God will never allow His people to yield. And one secular, but terribly attractive thing, is "the love of money", (which Paul says) "is, the root of all evil: (1 Timothy 6 verse 10). A prolific root fixed in the heart of man, and in the hearts of some in particular, and pursuing this one thing, the obtaining of what men so love, causes them to "err from the truth," (James 5 verse 19), by which it is clear, that these erroneous people were only nominal professors of God's truth.

O think of it, if you fall, if I fall into this snare, the love of money, we shall fall into a terrible condition of mind. The faith we profess will be abandoned, and like those, "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows," (James 6 verse 10). for the temptation prevailing, carries men into evil practices, deceit, defrauding and all kind of things done to obtain that end, the love of which, prompts them, urges them, then the Holy Ghost addresses through Paul to Timothy "But thou O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (verse 10). Then the text "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." Faith is a God given grace, called by many, a cordial grace, a kind of parent grace, for where it is, and where it is in exercise, there will also be found other graces. It never stands, and never works alone. It is a grace, that, if I may express it, does two things, in one action. It exalts God, it debases the sinner. It says to the sinner, you are nothing but sin, but to God it offers worship, reverence, holy fear, tenderness and fervent desire.

It is the beginning of wisdom in man. The fear of God always attends it, and the fear of God in Holy Scripture, appears to mean, the whole of religion, real religion. Faith has its own proper object, its proper object is God, and He is pleased to reveal Himself. If He reveal Himself to us, in the law, faith exercises itself on Him, in that particular reference. His justice, His majesty, His claims in the law on us, faith receives and believes, then the conscience is full of condemnation, fear, terror, a sense of distance from God, of inability to please Him, of our infinite indebtedness to pay, of which it never can hope; it flies to good works, and they fail it. God is the object of faith in that reference. If the Holy Ghost reveals God in Christ, then faith goes in that direction and says, with the man whose eyes had been opened, "Lord I believe; help Thou my unbelief." (Mark 9 verse 24). Christ becomes the object of the soul's faith, desire and hope, and casts, as enabled an anchor into the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.

If the Spirit drops upon the mind any gracious invitation, faith takes hold of that, believes it and follows it. If Christ says "Come unto me" faith says "Lo glad I come". If the Holy Ghost speaks a promise, then faith looks at that promise, and sees in it an infinite sufficiency. If God is revealed to the soul, as the God of providence, then wherever there is trouble, and necessity, emptiness, faith sees an abundant supply, and if I have rightly expressed this matter, you will see that God is the proper object of faith, in whatever reference or particular, it pleases His Divine Majesty to reveal Himself. This cuts off the pretensions of human intellect, acquirement, strength, wisdom, prudence and whatever, a man may think himself capable of knowing or doing. And it brings him to this, none but God in Christ can save me, and only the teaching and operation of the Spirit can, bring union between Jesus Christ and the lost soul. And this is a very cutting truth, cutting away all the pretensions of man, and their religion, and it is no easy thing to believe this.

Let me say, by the way, just a word more on that, which I spoke in reading the chapter in Hebrews. The best scientist in the world, is the man who has the strongest faith in the word of God, as it describes creation. And all the foolishness, the inner perception, the assured result of scholarship, and the trampling of the word of God underfoot. The convenient millions of years, it has taken to form certain things, which the geologist says he has discovered. All these things are just folly, science falsely so-called is reigning. God only knows how many other things. I would say to you young people, hang about God's word. In six days God made heaven and earth. (Genesis 1 verse 31). He created all by the breath of His mouth. He created all by His Son, (John 1 verse 3).

Who is "upholding all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1 verse 3). Now Timothy, having this faith, is exhorted to fight, and a fight it is in the experience of all who have faith, but it is called the good fight. "Fight the good fight of faith". Good because God says, "Fight", and what He says is good. Good because the enemies, for there is no fight where there are no enemies, the enemies are devils, sin, the world, flesh, lust, love of money, and all kinds of evil. And it is a good fight when you are engaged in fighting, such and such things. I would as enabled speak a little about this good fight. Fight the good fight" of faith, in seeking more and more after God. Follow after God, after righteousness, after godliness, Communications from God make a man lively, tender, enlarge his understanding, quicken, strengthen, and maintain, the fear of God in him. Make him to desire to live to the praise and glory of Gods grace.

If you have faith you will be sure to have enemies, unbelievers get along well, as they think. Believers are staggered, hounded, crippled, thrown down, hindered, and in many, many regards, they come to answer to that scripture. "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (Romans 8 verse 36). If you are following God you will have sin in your heart, and devils about you, and the beast 'reason', that Luther speaks of, trying to devour you. But faith, O it is a wonderful warrior, faith has no doubt in it. It has many doubts about it, many enemies crying against it, many swords pointed at it, many hard questions put to it. As Paul exhorts Timothy in his next Epistle, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 2 verse 3). The main pursuit of living faith is after God, to know Him, to see Him, to embrace Him, for a match to be made between the soul and Himself. To walk up and down in His name, to see His loveliness, to perceive His suitableness, to receive out of His fulness, will be the labour, or the fight of faith in a very large part of the life of a man of God. Faith won't let you be easy, in your attainments, it won't persuade you that you have a great deal, it won't leave you, free to say, you have got this, and you know that, and that you are resting comfortably on your attainments. It will make you say, O I like Paul's words, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after," (Philippians 3 verse 12). That is the thing, "I follow after", it is not much that I know, but believing that I may know more, I follow after. But we are verily, not the best believer, one may say, and I say it of all of us here who have faith, we only follow at a distance. I am sorry for this in myself, that we only follow on at a distance. You will have unbelief to fight with, you have many wants, and unbelief says there is no supply.

You have many sins, and unbelief will say, they will kill you, they will have the victory, you have many troubles, and unbelief will say, they have not been sanctified, and they will not be sanctified, you will be worse for them, rather than better. What is faith's office here? It is to say, "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me." (Psalm 57 verse 2). I will look to the Lord Jesus, and plead with the Father, for His precious blood, and look to the Saviour's mighty arm, to hold me up. And seek to dwell "in the secret place of the Most High (and) abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91 verse 1). I will make God my refuge, I will trust His word, I will lean on His arm, I will follow His directions, and as you are enabled to stick to it, this is a fight. Sometimes faith is strong enough to say,

Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear;
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform;
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

(Gadsby's 232 verse 1)

O yes, a child of God, is not always under the foot of unbelief. He is not always saying, O I am overcome. Sometimes, he can say, With Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm. Fight the good fight of faith, in seeking more of God, more communications from Him, and in making that humble confession, that the great Apostle made, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3 verse 12). Unto the resurrection of the dead, you will see if you have faith, many empty places in our experience. How can these be filled? Faith will tell you, out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus. You will see quantities of imperfections in your profession. How can these be dealt with? Only by Him who gives out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus, for what we lack, we cannot make up. Who can add that which is lacking? Paul desired that, believers should be brought on their way, that nothing should be lacking. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thessalonians 2 verse 10) How can this be, if there is no faith in exercise? Take the most advanced, richly experienced child of God, in this chapel, and I say to him, or to her, now are you alright? well the answer would be, I know sometimes I can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Timothy 1 verse 12). But I am very poor, I have not much faith, and if I get crossed in any matter, I know I have got an evil temper, and an impatient mind.

And if some foolish things, were hung before my silly eyes, they are bewitched. I go after vanity, and leave substance. I know you will say that, Then what? "Fight the good fight of faith." What is lacking, God can make up. And then it may be presented to some of us, you have been a long time in the way, and how little you have attained, and you begin to acknowledge it with shame. I suppose I have professed God's name, longer than any of you, and I do believe, honestly I can say it, that I greatly lack more than many of you, and He only knows my shame, day and night about this. But now I can see, I do see how one can be made a tree of righteousness, full of sap. O that has hurt me sometimes, in my soul, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap;" (Psalm 104 verse 16). What a dry tree one feels to be, do you feel so? but remember this, and this is the cutting part of that scripture, "To show that the Lord is upright: He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (Psalm 92 verse 15). God shows His uprightness in a green tree, in making it green, keeping it green, flourishing in His own courts. Ah says unbelief, you will never get there, Faith says I will try, faith is a trying, struggling grace, a grace that pours out sorrow, confession, sighs, groans, sobs, petitions, continually under the influence of the Holy Ghost. O that I were better in my soul, "Heal me, O Lord," (Jeremiah 127 verse 14), for I have sinned, heal my bones for I have sinned.

"Fight the good fight of faith," the blessed fight of faith. Good because, God says fight, and good because it fights God's enemies, and against your own enemies. You have to fight against, not only the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, but against the friendship of the world, and against the devil. I think it was last Lord's day, that I said, that ever since Christ was promised in Genesis, the devil's aim and war, and fighting in the whole world has been at Jesus Christ, aimed at His Person, and that is the devil's business today in the professing church of God. And with scientific men, and modernists, and all talk about union with the churches, is without reference to the glory of God. Now you have to fight, O, you who fear God, some of us have, as we hope got a little beyond some things. You have to meet the devil, the devil in the school, the devil in the business, and you may often be discouraged, and say I cannot get along. If you have faith, you wont try to get along alone, you will want to have another with you. "Two are better than one;" (Ecclesiastes 4 verse 9), and that better, is Jesus the Son of God Incarnate. And what you have before you, there is heaven, God has set heaven before you, and God has spoken. And the devil, comes and says, "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3 verse 1), O, many a stagger doth a child of God get there. You say He promised you something. Did He? Has it been fulfilled? No, you say, then He did not speak it?

You will accept it perhaps for a moment, his lying assertion, for the truth. "Fight the good fight of faith." Abraham believed in hope, against hope. Death was nothing to Abraham, for the moment, death was nothing. Double death was nothing for the moment, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith," (Romans 4 verse 20). Fight the devil, he will come against the Holy Scripture, and against what you have of the scripture in your own hearts. Faith's struggle is this, Apollyon may come one day, and straddle across the way, and say you are a deserter, you shall go no further, and you may get a blow, that will lay you on the ground. Some of us older people have had that kind of experience, more than once. Christians are called, we see, "not to play, but to fight," so says Hart, and so says the scripture.

Believers are not called, we see,
To sleep or play, but fight. (Gadsby's 782 verse 4)

Remember that is the fight of faith, and that faith's grand object is God, and every struggle, that you make in your soul, against sin and temptation, you make for God's honour, and He won't forget it." For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed towards His name," (Hebrews 6 verse 10). If you can hang on Him, cleave to Him, and say, I believe God is right whatever becomes of me, I believe He is righteous, whatever may be done to me. You have a faith which will never disown Him.

Another movement of faith, or fight or faith, is this, that she works and seeks to maintain, her ground, in pleading with God. Of all the discouraging things, this is one of the most discouraging, that there seems to be a cloud, often between faith, and that pleading with God which is pleasing to Him. All pleading has a ground and reason, and it is important to notice this. If you do plead, or if you argue with God, mind the ground of it. Cain took a sacrifice without blood, and he was rejected. If you take an offering, a prayer, a petition, and do it without the blood of Christ, you will have no success. But if in pleading, you confess your shortcomings, unbelief, hardness, forgetfulness of God, unthankfulness, and yet plead the blood that Christ has shed, then, you are on good ground, and God will listen to you. O it is good, you can manage anything on your knees, if your faith has this before it, and it is your only plea. Business troubles, debts, needs, weakness, follies, and enemies, if you can only manage them on your knees, and plead the atoning blood of Christ, you will get through, you will get the victory. My brethren, this is a great fight, but do mind this point, that you plead the blood of Jesus Christ. Not easy, especially when your sins are before you.

If there is one scripture that I can use honestly, daily, it is this, "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51 verse 3). God only knows the shame of it, the pain, but it is no bar sometimes, Why not? Because, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1 verse 7). Sweet is the hope, and penetrating is the comfort of the blood of Christ, when the Spirit makes it known, and your faith lays hold of it. You plead the blood, that Christ so freely shed. "Fight the good fight of Faith."

"Fight the good fight of faith" in seeking closer union, and more familiar communion. Ah there is such a thing, as nearness to God, such a blessing as communion with Him. Men know that nearness when they get it, they know that communion when their Lord speaks to them, and they are encouraged to speak with Him, when, as if He should say, you have trouble, "pour out your heart before Him:" (Psalm 62 verse 8), and there is no bar. You have enemies, bring them to Me, needs, lay them before Me, great difficulties, speak of them to Me. Nor are you alone in this, there is one near you, a prompting Spirit, a teaching Spirit, and if one should say to you, what is God's will in this trouble, you might say, I do not know, and yet all the while, you may be pleading, according to the will of God, by the inward intercession of the Holy Ghost, who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Romans 8 verse 26). And does so "according to the will of God." (verse 27). That is a shining scripture to me at times, maketh intercession, knoweth all things, knows the mind of God.

Only think of an ignorant creature, a poor troubled sinner seeking God, not knowing the will of God, and yet all the while, praying according to that will, and the answer comes. It must come,

And prayer indited by the Lord,
The Lord will surely hear. Gadsby's 725 verse 4

Some people have answers to prayers in their houses, in their business, and some have answers in their consciences, by the blood of Christ. And in their hearts, by the revelation of Christ, and by their union to Him. The first is good, the latter is better. "Fight the good fight of Faith". O says the enemy, you will never attain, Who told him so? What has the devil to do with these things? he "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (1 Peter 5 verse 8). But in the court, here is the Lord Jesus, and He only needs to say, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" (Zechariah 3 verse 2), and all is well. Well it wont be long before the end comes, to some of us, but as long as we live, we shall need to fight.

Is there no protection for a fighter, for one who is fighting the fight of faith? Yes, we are told of it in Ephesians 6. The whole armour of God, and thus there is safety, protection, and "God is a Sun and Shield:" (Psalm 84 verse 11). I have made no pretensions of opening up this scripture, in an orderly way. May the Lord if it please Him, make some little use, of the broken observations. We are poor fighters, for the most part, but our enemies are ceaseless in their opposition, ceaseless in their aim to overthrow, and to take us into captivity. May the Lord make us observant of this. "Fight the good fight of Faith, lay hold on eternal life," which is, lay hold on the Lord Jesus, and in Isaiah we read, of those, "who would set the briars and thorns against (Him) Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." (Isaiah 27 verse 4).

"Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." (verse 5). Let him lay hold of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, the friend of sinners, who kindly draws the soul to Himself. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." (John 12 verse 32). Let him lay hold of Me, "Lay hold of eternal life," O but it is presumptuous says the enemy, "Whereunto thou art also called". God has called you to it, God has revealed the Saviour to you, it may be at a distance, but He says, Lay hold of this My son, I have called you to it, I intend you to enjoy it. It is My gift to you, lay hold of it. How? By faith.

"And hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." Some have done this, some think that the Apostle here means, that Timothy had professed a good profession, at his ordination as a minister, and bishop. That we must leave, there is such a thing as a good profession, a good profession is an honest spiritual profession, of what the Holy Ghost has done for your soul. Nothing more is needed, nothing, if He has done a little, just say that little. A good profession is, a profession of Jesus Christ, but you will have to fight for it, for its maintenance. "Hold fast your profession, says the Holy Ghost in scripture." "Draw near (to God) with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," (Hebrews 10 verse 22), and hold fast your profession unto the end. You are God's house, says the Spirit again, ["whose house are we" (Hebrews 3 verse 6)] to the saints "if we hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end;" (Hebrews 3 verse 14).

May the Lord bless us with this precious, fighting grace, and do not think you are well, when you are without conflict.

Amen