

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 31 July 1932

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"

The best definition of faith that the world has ever heard, will hear, or can hear, is that which is given by the Holy Ghost through Paul - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". And the best demonstration of that definition we have in the person of Saul of Tarsus when Jesus met him, and faith instantly was created and raised in his heart, so that, that Person whom, in the disciples, the Apostle was persecuting, became a Divine Person to Paul. "Who art Thou Lord?" And a beautiful illustration of this we have in the man who was born blind, and whose eyes the Lord opened, who was excommunicated by the scribes and Pharisees, and was after that met by Christ, and asked this important question - "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is He Lord that I might believe on Him?" was not the unbelieving question, but the enquiring question, and he got a sweet answer. "Thou hast both seen Him and it is He that talketh with thee", and the man worshipped. He believed and worshipped and got in his soul the substance of all that was to be believed, that will ever be believed, and enjoyed by the Church of God through eternity. Now if that be so, is it not an important question for us - Have we this faith? Not, Are we religiously disposed? Not, Do we generally believe in the Bible? - good though that be - but, Have we this divine gift, this wonderful grace - faith? If we have, we have to fight. Faith is called precious, precious because of its origin - it is the gift of God. It is called the faith of the operation of God, because He, and He alone, works it in the heart. And, as the faith is precious, so also is the trial of it. The trial of your faith being precious, more precious than gold though it be tried with fire. If your faith, even if it be real, has not as yet been tried, you cannot depend on it. Every new rail, before opened to

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general traffic, is tried. There is a test, and that new railway must bear that test before it can bear, and be permitted to have, general traffic. You may have a real faith, but if it has no test, no trial, you cannot say what it is. "The Lord trieth the righteous", tries His Own gift. Not to prove it to Himself to be right, but to prove it to the good of those who have it, and to the praise of the glory of His grace. God made promises to Abraham, and Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness, yet God tempted Abraham, that is, tried him. David was anointed to be the king of Israel, but though the oil was upon him, his confidence, his faith, was tried. Trial is not sent to prove faith to be weak and false. All the trials on David did not prove the oil that was poured on him to be water. No trial will prove faith to be wrong, but prove it to be of God, and for the glory of God. And trial comes in the form of an enemy in many cases. The world is an enemy to faith; science, falsely so called, is an enemy to faith; faith has to stand and fight against this enemy. The flesh is an enemy. You will never take one true step toward heaven that will not more or less distinctly be tested, contradicted by the flesh, and resisted. The business of faith is to fight this flesh. And, as the devil, from the moment he conquered Eve to this moment, has been fighting against the Son of God in the church - it must be in the Church because He is nowhere else as a Saviour - so he has to be resisted. "Resist the devil". And what a business the life of a Christian is, and when grace is in exercise the life of a child of God is not an easy life. A pleasant, comfortable, respectable profession of religion, men may have, many have, and a fight to such is very repugnant. All you have to do is to believe, as if it were easy. It is not easy to men who have faith. I should judge that some of you here, if you, sitting here, or after the service going home, could say in your hearts - "Lord, I believe Thee; I believe what Thou hast said to me, I believe in Thy grace, in Thy power; I believe in the wisdom of Thy providence, and in Thy prudence, and I believe that Thou wilt fulfil in me every promise given to me - you would feel yourselves to be very highly favoured, and I would call you miracles. Miracles? There are some in Brighton, there are some all the world over, even where believers are. This fight is worth all the trouble, dangers, difficulties, and seeming defeats which are very shameful to those who suffer them, because there is a victory awaiting. It is a fight for God, a fight for your own life, a fight for your soul, a

fight for heaven, a fight against evil, against pollution, against that most immoral thing - as I have often said to you - that most immoral thing in existence, namely unbelief. It is a fight for your conscience. It is a fight, if I may so put it, a fight for your knees, for you would never kneel before God if flesh could avoid it, either in your persons, or in your hearts. It is a fight for truth, for holy Scripture, for the perfectly inspired Scripture. It is a fight for a sober mind, a fight for a godly life. "Fight the good fight". It is a "good fight". All fighting is not good. The "fight of faith" is a good thing. Good in God's sight, and eventually good in the sight, and to the sense, of every person engaged in it who comes off more than a conqueror. My brethren, you are not called to sleep nor play, but fight.

The Apostle writes to Timothy concerning the things of this life - "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out", and all the efforts of men to obtain wealth are only efforts to obtain dust, which, though it glitter, is heavy, and if a man clothe himself with it he is only clothing himself with thick clay. "Having food and raiment" - and a habitation, for the word will bear that - "let us be therewith content". It would seem that the Apostle means - If you have sufficient to maintain the position in which God in His providence has placed you, be therewith content. "The love of money is the root of all evil". It leads to bitterness, hatred, and contention in families. It leads to dishonest dealing among men. It causes the beam to cry out in the house to the wall. It leads to grievous injustice done to the poor. O what does it not lead to? Every kind of evil. "They that will be rich" - which brings in many poor people; perhaps some in this chapel, poor, and with perhaps barely more than necessary for every day needs, "will be rich". Would you be rich? Are you aiming at being rich? Would you have a safe with a quantity of certificates in it? If you could do that, lock yourself up in your safe, your soul would be no better for that. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare". If they kneel down before this, "will be rich" stops them. If they had faith, apparently, before, they depart from it under the power of this temptation. They are led "into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred

from the faith....." They were professors; mind, they were professors. They held the faith in their head, perhaps they talked about the faith, perhaps they were deemed Christians in the church, but this love of money, this greed of money which made them unjust in their dealings, and corrupt in their lives, made them err from the faith. This led them away. They wandered from the faith, "and pierced themselves through with many sorrows". O professor, mind this "will be rich". "But thou, O man of God" - thou art exposed to these evils, thou hast the very counterpart of them in thy nature; thou art not free from temptation; if thou wouldest flee from death and hell - "flee these things". Turn thy back on them. May the Lord speak this to any man, any woman, in this congregation who may be near to such a snare. O man of God, O woman of God, turn thy back on this dreadful thing, this love of money, this "will be rich". There are better things than money. A pure conscience by the blood of Christ - who can estimate the worth of that? "The peace of God which passeth all understanding" - who can say how rich that is and how it enriches the person who feels it? "The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost" - who can say what that is worth? The riches of grace, the prudence and mercy of God in Christ, and the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush, true riches. Jesus in the Proverbs says - "Riches and honour are with Me; yea durable riches and righteousness". I lead away from this "will be rich". "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgement: That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." It is a great mercy to have a heart empty enough for Christ. Most men, Bunyan tells us, will talk of Christ being a suitable Saviour, but, asks he - "Where will you find a sinner suitable for Christ?" A very searching question. How many of you think yourselves suitable for Christ? Flee these things as you would flee from death, from poison, and from hell. Flee these things that drown men in destruction and perdition.

"And follow after righteousness". This may be spoken of in two ways, and I will mention them briefly. First, the righteousness of Christ for justification. If we are destitute of that, it matters not what else we have. If we have not this garment on us when the King comes we may be at a table with His friends, but He will look at us, and look on us, and ask the searching question - "How camest thou in

hither not having on a wedding garment?" Have you got it, or are you following after it? Happy the man who follows after righteousness for justification. Flee from evil, follow after righteousness; the work, the righteous, clean, holy work of the Holy Ghost in your heart. That will lead to a clean life amongst men. "The fear of the Lord is clean"; follow after that. You will be clean if this holy fear moves you. Clean in your words, clean in your conduct, clean among men. This fear actively moving will have some effect on your tongue, that unruly member that no man can tame. So you will "put away lying and speak truth every man with his neighbour". O, it is great to have the work of the Holy Ghost in you. Follow godliness which is "profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come". "Godliness" here must be taken to be that blessed, divine work of God resulting in a life of righteousness. "Look not every" Christian "man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus". And if you have more than you actually need and you know a poor brother and say to him, with your pocket buttoned up, "be warmed and fed" and give him not wherewith, what are your words? Hypocrisy. "Godliness" follow after it. Faith that may move you and assist you in all that is good. Love, love to God and His children, for "he that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" Patience in tribulation, enabling you to wait on God till the day of deliverance comes. Meekness under, it may be, some persecution, some bitter words, some unjust accusation. Remember the Lord's word - "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely". Do not forget where to put the emphasis "falsely".

It Then that "good fight of faith". First faith will fight for what it has, what God has given to it. Here, a question - What have you had from God? What has He said to you? What has He given to you? An instance for example. God called Abraham alone and blessed him and He gave him a promise. He gave it him, He spoke it to him. An important thing. Everything is at stake here. If you have had something from God, and your faith has laid hold of it, there is a devil who will come and say you did not get that from God, or unbelief will say, that has not been fulfilled, you have no proof that God spoke it to you. Your circumstances may say, It cannot be fulfilled. Two dead people in the

particular respect in which God spoke to them, Abraham and Sarah his wife, dead in the particular respect in which God spoke to them. Abraham believed God and though Sarah laughed in her heart, God's promise was fulfilled. Have you got something to fight for? Can you say sometimes, I do believe God said such and such a word to me? It was a begun matter but it is not yet fulfilled. "Fight the good fight of faith". Keep that which thou hast. Keep what God has given to you. Hart says - "Soul and all's at stake". You may say, If this be proved untrue, what will become of my soul? Did not the Lord Jesus speak? Did He not give me a sight of Himself? Did not the Holy Ghost make known that wonderful, glorious, mysterious Person in my heart? Shall I give up all that? Shall I renounce all that? O, says the Spirit by Paul - "Fight the good fight of faith". "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust", and one may accommodate that word to this point. Keep what God has given you. No easy thing. To talk of a battle is one thing; to be engaged in it is another. Here is the enemy; his artillery, his well laid schemes against your soul, against your believing, against your holding fast to God, and now you, a weak creature, feeble, and unable to say, but the Lord has done it, must fight. "Hold fast that which thou already hast" said Christ to the Church in Thyatira. Hold it fast O believer, you have got something worth holding, and if the enemy would snatch it from you, fight for it. Did Jesus ever appear to be a house to you, a habitation, a refuge, and now a storm comes. Flee to this, and hold fast what God has given to you. All is at stake here. "Fight the good fight of faith" for what God has given you. How shall I fight? On your knees. Reason? Well, the devil is a better reasoner than anybody in this place, more subtle, knows his own logic better than you, but if you can, by faith, go before God. As you walk the streets of Brighton, or as you may be engaged in household duties, or be at your business, your hearts kneeling down; Lord, didst Thou not say to me? Was I deceived? Is it true that I made a mistake? Open Thou mine eyes, and if I got it from heaven help me to hold it. "Fight the good fight". It is not for the advantage of the flesh that you fight. You owe nothing to the flesh. We are not debtors to the flesh in this matter. No, we are poor creatures, full of sin, and evil, but this grace of faith says, I cannot rest short of God. I am unable to get rest short of the Saviour. I do not know how to get at Him, but I will try. Hezekiah had a battle; he turned him to the wall, he poured him

out a prayer that brought relief, relieved him from pain, and much more than that, "brought the recanting prophet back, and turned the mind of God" Jacob had power over the angel and prevailed. This is the fight. You have got God to go to. You have got the enemy against you, the flesh against you, unbelief against you, probably circumstances against you in your family, in your business, in your person, all against you, all beating against you as wind beats against a wall, shaking, bending, moving, but the root is there, the rooted stock. Fight this good fight, lay hold of this, keep what you have.

Well brethren, you understand a little, I understand a little, that it is not easy to hold fast. Says Paul to the Hebrews, "Hold fast the profession of your faith" What profession have you made? Well, perhaps you have professed to no creature; the religion you have may just be between God and your soul, but you have said to Him, Lord I believe. You have laid hold of some word which He dropped upon your heart, and you have said to Him, Lord I believe it. I have said it to Him. Now you have to hold that and it is not easy.

And further in the next place fight the good fight to get more. Much more is in Christ than we know. We have never fully conceived the fullness of love and righteousness and grace and wisdom and prudence in the Lord Jesus. Paul had, by trouble, to find out how much more there was in Christ than he had hitherto known. The thorn in the flesh moved him, as who would not be moved by such a thing, it moved him to pray, to ask for ease in that particular. Lord, remove it. That is just what you would do, what I would do, what we have done. Trouble coming on human nature moves human nature and human nature says first of all when trouble comes, now how can I get out of it? Then faith moves, and yet he asks what is not good. It asked amiss in Paul and the Lord came in mercy to him and, as it were, said, It would not be good for you to not have this thorn, but with it I will give you sufficient grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee". And the effect of that was very beautiful, and very wonderful, very God glorifying. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity". I am glad to be weak that Christ's strength may be perfected in me. Pray for more. You may get more trouble as you pray for more grace, but you will get more grace and trouble will be the way to bring it, the

channel by which it will come. Are you content with present attainments? If you get a soft feeling, does that content you? If you get a good time in prayer, is that enough for you without an answer? If it be so, your present state is not satisfactory. I mean this, you will need more grace, and when you get older you will understand it better than you can now, you who are younger. I know this, being an old man, that age does not cripple sin. Sin does not grow old, it is not decrepit; active, painful. What then? You need more grace. Does the Scripture ever promise more grace? Yes. "He giveth more grace". Has He visited you? Yes, you say. Then you want Him again. "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" was the prayer of the Psalmist.

You will have many enemies. The love of ease, unbelief by which you depart from the living God. Many a day you may be departing from Him through unbelief, and yet for a time hardly suspect it, but if you diligently, through grace, can watch your spirit, you will perceive when you are departing from God. You will know what you are doing in a sense; you will say, I am departing, and you will find the truth of that Scripture - "My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Is there a child of God here who is absolutely innocent of that, that double error? I expect all would say, O we have done it, we have done it, we have done it times without number. "Fight the good fight of faith". Seek grace to follow hard after God as the Psalmist did. "My soul followeth hard after Thee" O it is good to get fresh supplies, good to believe in the fullness, the infinite fullness of grace that Jesus possesses. Fight against the world. You say, It has no charms for me. No charms? Can you really say it? The gross things of the world may not have charms for you. When God dealt with me as a young man He absolutely killed one sin; the only thing I can say that of. I was passionately fond of the theatre, and in a moment He killed it, and from that moment to this I have never had a desire that way. But O the world, you may be intensely worldly in other respects. How shall I fight this? Follow after God. If God be before your faith, the world will be behind your back; your back will be to the world then. O if you see the loveliness of Christ, if you behold the suitableness of that blessed Person, if you see that infinite, that spotless robe that makes

beautiful the sinner whom it covers, and to whom it gives a title for heaven, I say your back will be to the world, but we have got so much of the world in us. Jesus, when the tempter came to Him, says He finds nothing in Me. If the world comes to you, you cannot say it - It has nothing in me. We have got just the world here, and an external world appeals to it in some particular. "Fight the good fight of faith". Resist these things. You may be worldly on your knees. O the subtlety of the world in your heart. The world is set in the heart of the sons of men and while speaking to God you may be building your house, doing some business. I can say these things because I know them. I have not read of them somewhere only, but I know them. I am ashamed that I know them, but I know also what it is to hate them and to say

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It hath no charms for me

How shall I fight this? By following after God. By seeking to know Christ more. By praying that the Holy Ghost may be with you, that there may be an intimacy between you and God, that He may often hear from you, that you may hear from Him, that it pleases Him to speak to you, that you may see the beauty of truth, the beauty of the gospel, the greatness of the gospel, the glory of the gospel. Nothing like light to put darkness away. When the dawn of day broke this morning, according to the light of it, so went the darkness from this chapel, and as the light increased so went darkness till now it is full of light. So when Christ's light shines darkness begins to go, and, says a sinner in whom that light shines, I would have more. "Lord open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." And so light comes and shines more and more unto the perfect day. But fight. "Fight the good fight of faith". I must leave it for the moment. May the Lord enable us to listen to this divine injunction, this holy precept, and give us grace, more grace, that we may say with the Psalmist - "My soul followeth hard after Thee".

AMEN.