

513 70 A

1366 i
La 1812

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARDS DEPARTMENT

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton on Sunday Morning 9.8.1925.

Text: Ephesians IV verses 1, 2 and 3.

"I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

These gracious words have a foundation. You will never find an exhortation to the saints in the scriptures that has not a foundation for it previously laid. This being so makes the exhortation very comely, suitable, very proper, and lays an obligation on all the saints to whom it is written to obey. The Apostle was a prisoner for the Lord's sake. I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, for His sake. The gospel always brings trouble. It used to bring persecution; it may do again, probably will, but if there be no open persecution for the gospel there will always be trouble for it, and about it. If you meet no opposition of any sort or kind on account of your profession, your profession is questionable as to its nature. The Holy Ghost manifests beautiful tenderness and care for the church of Christ. As He loves to honour the person of Christ so He shows His care for the church of Christ. It is His work to glorify Christ and to bring saints into union with Him. The foundation for this exhortation is the calling of the people. "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called". This calling has its foundation in God, and I would draw your attention to this in the first place. You have it in

the Romans where the Spirit says by Paul "Moreover, whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son and whom He did predestinate them He also called" and of the same nature and spirit are the words of the Apostle Peter when he says that God had called the Dispersion by His glory and virtue; in virtue of His eternal purpose, in virtue of His illustrious grace, given in Christ Jesus before the world was, He had called these people. Glorious love, glorious grace, glorious power made known in the effectual call that had reached these people's souls. O what a foundation and source of true religion this sets before us. See christian, the foundation of your religion. Not some natural religiosity, not some desire to be what men call good, what they regard as being proper education. Not some regard for the Bible which inculcates worship but the very heart of God in an eternal determination to lay hold of some sinners and give them a new heart and a right spirit, dignity, honour, majesty, power, glory, in every christian in whom this blessed, this divine call is. Anything short of this foundation in a person's religion is indeed a very serious lack. I do not say that every child of God realises that this is the source of his religion but it is so in effect and it will become so in gracious knowledge in time. You have the same set forth in Ezekiel where the prophet by inspiration tells the Jews that their church state, their national state as an emphatically religious state under theocracy took place purely and from God Himself. A dead child, loathsome by reason of iniquity is used as a figure to show how that true religion has its rise in God, that the church state had its rise in God, in God as He came, as He spake, as He passed by, as He spread over that child His skirt as He said "live" and He said "and thou becamest mine" Here then you have

that which in your souls can never die, and will carry you eventually into heaven. Whether the beginning is clear, powerful, indubitable to you, or not; whether it be just the opening of the heart to attend unto the things of God, the feeling that you are wrong and that there is something the matter with you which you cannot understand, whether it be just a feeling hardly describable by you, that there is a God in heaven whom you have offended, whose pardon you need, or whether it be some more remarkable beginning and the carrying on over a time of that by distinct operations, this difference in measure, in manner, cannot affect the principle. That is in every case the same. What a mercy to have your heart opened to attend unto the things of God, to have your eyes opened to perceive that there is a God in heaven, to have your conscience affected respecting Him; to believe that you have indeed offended Him, broken His law, outraged His goodness, trampled under foot His authority, despised Him. O what a mercy to believe you are a sinner, so to believe you are a sinner as that you come to feel that if God would show no mercy, if He left you to fall lower and lower as long as you live and then ultimately to fall into the bottomless pit of hell, there to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, He would be just. That is a great thing, a very distinct point in experience. A rise of this in the soul is in the new birth, "And you hath He quickened;" This is an experimental rise, that is to say it is in the sinner in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Thence all the exercises, hunger, thirst, fear, prayer, repentance, faith, all take their rise from this operation of the Holy Ghost. "Ye must be born again" How many in this chapel to whom such a word may be applied, God knows, but to you who are dead in trespasses and sins, one would say your position is beyond all

expression dreadful, terrible. Think of it sinner. You may be on the brink of eternity and you are a sinner; fit fuel for hell fire, and fit object and subject for divine wrath; fit for the curse of the law to take effect on you in perdition. If you die as you now are, there is no hope for you, not a vestige of hope in the Bible, and out of this there is no right teaching. Oh if the Lord would quicken you, how gladly would one take all of you to heaven so to speak. The Lord think on you for good and give you an opened heart to attend unto those things which He has revealed as necessary for salvation.

By the new birth a sinner becomes active. Life is an active thing. You cannot keep it silent; it is, when you sleep, active spiritually. Spiritual life is an active thing; it acts in two ways. It acts in God, to God, after God; it acts in the sinner to himself. Oh that I were right. I have offended that great God of whom I have lived in ignorance till now. It is a call then divine that the Lord's people receive each one when that new birth takes place, that mysterious act of the Holy Ghost, that marvellous operation beginning a radical change in the mind, the soul, the understanding, the conscience, the affections, and the will. This vocation has an object; this heavenly calling has an object. God is that object. It has an end, heaven. "Whom He called them He also glorified" This new heavenly birth shows its own nature in the exercises of those who are the subjects of it, in whom it is. It has an exercise according to its own nature; just as your own natural being has its exercises, so this new being has its exercises, and shows itself. You will have to separate from the world, if you are born again, and are not yet separated, and what is closer, you will be separated from your old self

sooner or later; separated from your old self. This is denying self, taking up the cross and following the Lord. The old man is not going to heaven; sin has to be destroyed. Blessed be God for one mercy, namely that sin and a sinner are separable. Sin is not an integral part of the human nature, therefore human nature will exist in heaven without sin, for sin is separable, and sin is separated, forgiven, subdued, and ultimately, as to its being, killed in the church. Says the Apostle "I beseech you brethren that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." This may try some of us whether we walk worthily or whether we should be ashamed of every step we have taken; whether we have had God before us; whether He is before us now. Whether we have ever been brought into an experimental conformity with that scripture "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or whether ye drink do all to the glory of God" A very solemn scripture and although you may say "You do not understand it", it will be a great mercy if you are brought into conformity to it.

Now this inward call will also produce an inward practice, a practice according to its own nature, and let us take this line this view as we may be helped by the Lord, of this solemn exhortation. If you are born again, this is true; you have to deal with God; He has dealt with you. He has quickened you, has shown His infinite kindness in calling you; has manifested His glory and His power in calling you, and He says "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" Here you have this an inward dealing in your conscience, in your spirit, by faith with God and God with you. This brings two together who are infinitely separated in their natures and yet are to be one

with Incarnate Deity throughout eternity. Faith, that cardinal grace, that grace that goes beyond reason, that tramples the beast reason under foot, faith that honours God, that looks on Him incarnate, that looks on Him on the cross, looks on Him in the grave, as rising, as ascending into heaven, as being there, as interceding there. Faith that has to do with God in providence, that has to justify Him in His solemn dealings; that faith that cleaves to Him when He hides Himself, that loves Him in His chastenings, in His exhortations, that follows after Him hard sometimes, that cannot, that knows no peace without Him, knows no rest without Him. This faith, if you walk according to your calling, is dealing with God. If I had, if you had, faith enough to make and keep you unhappy without God in your souls, in my soul, we should be very favoured. Look at your life; I do not mean your open life. Look at your life thus. Are you content or can you appeal to the Lord more or less continually and say to Him "Jesus my soul's athirst for Thee, absent from Thee I cannot rest." so "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". Do you reach out after Him? Is He the great, grand, exclusive object of your faith so that you enter somewhat into the language, the experience of Paul, when he said "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal". Probably you look very closely at your mortifying trials, you look very narrowly into some providences which you cannot understand and unbelief would live on them and would quarrel with God. That is an unworthy walk is it not? That kind of walking cost Moses his entrance into the land of

promise. He did not believe the Lord at that moment and therefore he was not to enter into the land of promise, and that kind of walking has injured some of us very greatly, and grievously. It is an unworthy walk. It hardens the heart against the Lord. It confuses the mind, it blinds the understanding to eternal things, and blessedness. It limits, it cripples, it cramps the judgment, it turns aside the affections, it makes the will stubborn and perverse. Unbelief is one of the most terrible sins. Philpot, I think it is, calls it the strong arm of the old man. It is an unworthy thing, unworthy the man who is born again, and called to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is with us. You will never be rid of it. The mercy is to be in conflict with it. Faith is in conflict with it. Faith wants to believe, desires to believe, aims at believing the Lord in the face of everything and this is worthy walking. "Walk worthy of the vocation". What has God manifested Himself in us for? He asks an important question by Jeremiah "Is Israel a home born slave, why then is he spoiled?" As if the Lord should say "Did I plant him a wholly right seed, did I give him a new life as mine, that he live in the way he does and sell himself to sin and go into bondage like a slave?" and brethren has the Lord brought us to know Himself in some measure, that we should walk as we used to walk? Jonah got into this place and he said he did well to be angry even unto death. His unbelief took him away from God and because God loved Him He went after him and caught him and brought him back. Unbelief is a bitter foe to our peace, a great hindrance to a steady walk. Unbelief is a barrier to communion with our best friend. It sends us to sleep; it makes us slumber. It impinges on trouble, on ignorance, on weakness. It feeds on sin and the Apostle says "Ye are not called to this; ye are

called to holiness; ye are not called to this". It is yours by nature; you are called away from it; called to be a believer, a depending soul, depending on that good God who has quickened you and called you by His glory and virtue, and the leanness of your soul testifies against you, and the distance you are from God testifies against you, and the barrenness and quarellsomeness of your spirit with Him, all these testify against you.

Walk worthy. Walk worthy of that love you have had some little experience of, for as you know, this exhortation follows immediately upon what the Apostle had spoken about the love of Christ. He prayed that the Lord would grant to these Ephesians according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, that they, being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" Think of it. Put your heart by the side of this. Put your inward life by the side of this. How do you stand? How do I stand? How does the church stand? How does any and every godly person in the congregation stand? Full of fear we are, some of us, but do we walk according to God's goodness

to us in quickening us and calling us out of the world and bringing us unto eternal life and giving us an eternal possession, an inheritance undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us? Brethren, take notice of this. Walk worthy of the vocation, the calling wherewith ye are called with regard to prayer. "Prayer was appointed to convey the blessings God designs to give. Long as they live should christians pray, for only while they pray they live." How often is this your life, when necessity presses, when afflictions squeeze you, when burdens press on you, when sin is active, when you get depressed in your spirit. To whom, to what do you turn? On whose arm do you seek to lean? Nothing is clearer in the scriptures respecting the saints than this that the Lord has set before them an open door giving access in Christ to Himself. Gives them by occasions His good Spirit says to them in the scripture "Open thy mouth wide." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." "Pray without ceasing". That is what He says and to walk according to such scriptures is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Do we? I know nature will abuse God's truth. It will say in you now God's decrees are fixed and a saint can never be other than a saint. That is the abuse that our old nature makes of divine truth. Says the Lord "Call upon Me." "Open thy mouth wide." Now take an instance of one who walked according to the vocation wherewith he was called in a certain thing. Take Asa. A million of soldiers came against him; a thousand thousand and three hundred chariots, and what was the good man's course? Why he was called to the throne of grace, and there he laboured, there he fought so to speak, there he handled his enemies. There he dealt with their strength, and the Lord appeared for Him. He walked according to the calling of God in his spirit and in his circumstances, and the Lord

appeared for him. Later another enemy came and what did he do. He had recourse to man, bought off a king, hired and bribed him to break his league with another nation, and what did the Lord say. He sent His prophet to him and told him what he had done and that he had angered the Lord and that he would have war during the remainder of his reign, and so hardened was the spirit of Asa that he was angry with the prophet and cast him into prison. His son Jehoshaphat is another instance of the two kinds, obedient and then making a league with an unbeliever. One may say but this is sacred history. It is, but has it no application? If you walk one day according to God's calling in your conscience and soul, what have you done another day? If one hour you found you could commit your case, body, soul, spirit, circumstances, commit all to Him, and have had some sweet mercy in it, some gracious acknowledgment of God on your soul in it, another trial may have come and nature, nature's passion, nature's unbelief, nature's carnal reasonings, these have prevailed and what have you come to. You have come into barrenness, hardness, darkness, dismay, not despair really, but the

result has been exceedingly painful, shameful, bringing a distance between you and God and stirring up His jealousy as He said "I am jealous over Zion with a great jealousy." How often have I provoked Him thus. Prayerlessness is a provocation to a heavenly Friend and Father. Prayerlessness is turning away from the source of supply, and of strength and of wisdom, and prayerlessness adds to the burden, increases the differences and make perplexities grow apace. Prayerlessness brings you into mire and mud, and guilt and confusion and straightness. Says the Holy Spirit by Paul "I beseech you" you to whom this love has been made known in some measure, you in whom the glory of God is to be by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end; I beseech you, possessed of such wealth, blessed with such grace, guided thus far, indulged in so many ways, I beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Oh that we could seek the Lord, that we were brought in a good measure to that scripture "Pray without ceasing", and again "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." You may lose a great deal by disobedience to this. You will never lose heaven but you lose a great deal here. One prophet did half the commandment of God and disobeyed in the other half and a lion met him and slew him, and you will get slain in some way by walking contrary to this "Pray without ceasing". The divine nature in the saints is of such a character as never to be really silent, and quiet, but the old nature is of such a kind and of such strength and activity and so near to us, such a neighbour, such a dweller with us as to deceive us very often, and turn us aside from the holy commandment of the Lord and His Apostles. O my brethren I do not know how many of you may be able to lift up your faces without shame in this particular. I know one who cannot. What a terrible thing for prayer a burden and task to be in you. Is it not the dear Friend in heaven, the liberal Friend in heaven, the gracious God who has never done us wrong, but

only good, who has said "Open thy mouth wide!" and we have turned away from Him, and if there has been an arm of flesh either in self or a friend, on which we thought we could lean, with what alacrity have we run to that friend, that arm. Do you complain of barrenness, it is in nature, and it is increased by the painful way of walking, the unworthy way of walking. Ye are not called to this. Were we born for slavery? Is Israel a home born slave, why then is he spoiled? As if the Lord should say did I call my son out of Egypt to turn again to vanity. Did I tell him to come to Me?

Did I set up My throne in his midst and place My Name and My glory there, that he may run to idols? Have I separated him from the nations round about that he should go voluntarily and determinedly join himself again in affinity with them? Have these questions no relation to you, to me? Walk worthy. May the Holy Ghost come upon us and give us a sense, a real powerful operative sense of the way, the poor carnal way in which we have walked, and turn us to the Lord.

Take the Corinthian church; what a solemn condition that church came into. Look at its beginning; see the grace of God that adorned it and the establishment of it, and of the testimony of Christ in it. As Paul says in the first chapter of his first Epistle how graced that church was, what an ornament it had put on it. You would have thought naturally that church would have walked differently from what it did. No, see how it turned away. The state of that church crippled the tongue and the pen of the Apostle Paul. So he said "I could not write unto you or speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes." What, a church highly favoured as that? Yes, and cannot we, may not we, turn aside to the vain jangling of our own nature, and turn to some idol or lean on some arm of flesh, and become poor, barren rebels, and as vagabonds, to use Hart's word. If any of you complain that your bones are seen sticking out, I hope the Lord will give you grace enough to look narrowly after the cause and I do not think you will leave yourselves to find it. I expect you will in

time say, the cause is in my heart, my depraved heart, my wicked, proud, prayerless, hard, ungrateful heart, and when you come to that conclusion, God will never contradict you, and no good man will. Then the blessed Spirit who brings you to that conviction, will deliver you from that condition. Walk worthy. Oh take the cases you have got, the body, the soul, the family, the circumstances, take the difficulties that surround you, from your own innate corruption, the weakness that arises from sin within you and the perplexities that come through your carnal reasoning, take these things as you can and place them at the footstool of the Lord Jesus and seek that He will give you grace to walk worthy. Remember who called you; remember His faithfulness to supply you, His power to sustain you, His wisdom to guide you, His love to bear with you, that has borne with you these years; remember Him who called you and put Him in mind of His holy promise. Walk worthy. The Lord exhorts us, and if I am enabled, without confusion, or without legalising things, to speak of the exhortation to you, may you be enabled to pay great heed unto it.

In the next place, walk worthy of the Lord in respect of hope. The grace of hope in the soul is one of the sweetest graces. It will hold up; it will buoy the spirit up in waters, waves, storms and threatened shipwreck. It will keep you with your eye on God. It will enable you to speak to your soul "Hope thou in God" Hope 'tis a sweet grace, a beautiful grace, and it has a wonderful object, the God of hope. Oh says a poor creature, this affliction will make an end of me; this sin will be my ruin; what will become of me? Hope says "Why art thou cast down O my soul and why art thou disquieted within me; hope thou in God". Look away from the lions' dens, look away from the mountains of leopards; look away from your wretched self, wicked self, weak self, deceitful self, hard, unthankful, unbelieving self; look away from this wicked self, this enemy of God and your own peace and look to Jesus, kind as strong, mercy joined with power. What cause have we for the

dismay that we feel? None. We have reason for shame. We have cause to be ashamed of self and of the steps we have taken and do take, under the influence of unbelief and dismay. Cause to be ashamed that we fix our gaze so intently on troubles and perplexities and say "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God" and the Lord has reason to say to some of us whose teacher He has been and whose guide and whose help, He has reason to say to us "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, hath it not been told thee, from the beginning, that the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint". There is no end to this mercy and we are called to walk before the God of hope. Grace has done it; grace has called us to this. Walk worthy of the God of hope. Look to the God of hope, wait on the God of hope, commit your case to the God of hope who says "Hope thou in God". Well what a blessing. "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you." When we look to this wicked thing self, there is every reason to give up, but we are not called to live on self; We are not called to live on self. William Gadsby prayed, and we pray with him sometimes in the hymn "Out of self to Jesus lead, for and in us intercede" Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Walk worthy of this blessed God of hope. Remember that His covenant is full of goodness, full of all needed supplies. Remember that He cannot break it because He has confirmed it by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. Remember that He has told you to put Him in remembrance. Put ^{me} in remembrance. Remember that faith says sometimes, remember Thy holy promise. Did

He call you into the wilderness to let you die there?
Unbelief says "yes, would to God we had never left Egypt."
Oh but what says the Lord "I promised you of the goodly
land" and He has made the promise to His saints in the
covenant and He makes it to each individual saint sooner or
later in the soul. He does not bring you into the
wilderness to slay you there, either with hunger or thirst.
He does not bring you into danger to let dangers devour you,
but brings you there to prove you and that you may prove
that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word
that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Yet this
miserable, this wicked heart turns into self and looks at a
dry land and looks at pits that are dried, having no water
in them, and looks at a barren thing, a barren heart and
many things in providence to try, and says "We shall never
get through", and that crooked serpent, the old serpent, he
whispers the same hellish lie into the mind and confusion is
the result. "Hope thou in God" God help us to say it. Walk
worthy of Him. Has He ever disappointed you? Never, and He
never will. One thing we have done for ourselves often; we
have interpreted some things according to our own judgment,
and that has brought trouble, and it ever will bring
trouble. The mercy is to be enabled to live a life of
faith, a life of prayer, a life of hope, in God, and as we
can do that and in the measure in which we can do by the
power of the Holy Ghost, we walk worthy of the Lord, of the
calling wherewith He has called us. Brethren look at these
things and may the Lord help you and help me to obey Him in
this solemn word "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye
are called."