

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham,  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, Sunday evening,  
25th February, 1934.

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Text: Ephesians 4 v. 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."

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It seems to me, that this text is very suitable to what I recently endeavoured to bring before you concerning Christ and His work for his church and people. He has done so much for them. He is so much to His Father, and has prepared such a position of exaltation for his people, that it becomes them, as they are brought into acquaintance with Him and these things, to listen to this exhortation, and endeavour, by grace to obey it. We owe everything that is above our fallen nature to Christ. Everything, we know and feel in our souls, we owe to the Spirit of Christ whom Christ has sent. Do we owe anything to Christ? If we are a part of His body, of His bride, do we owe anything to Him? I am sure your hearts and consciences who fear God, will speak and say, that you would, with all your hearts, wish to obey Christ. Wish to behave as a chaste virgin espoused unto Christ. To walk graciously, humbly, so as not to grieve and vex the Holy Spirit. So as not to bring any open reproach upon that so wondrous, so glorious name of Christ. Therefore, by the Lord's help, I shall speak to you this evening about this solemn obligation that is laid on us, that is brought before us in the text.

Paul was a prisoner at Rome when he penned this remarkable Epistle. He was full of the Spirit, not only for himself, but also for the inspired writing of this marvellous word contained in the first four chapters of the Epistle- Doctrine. If the Spirit thought it consistent with His honour and glory and the good of his people, to devote so much of the Bible to doctrine, ought we not to observe that? Ought we not to take very narrow, careful,

prayerful heed to doctrine? I think we ought. In my early days, I was very foolish in many things, and one speech that I once made in the pulpit, does, when I remember it, hurt me. It was so inconsistent with the scriptures. I remember it very well and painfully. I said 'We do not want doctrine, we want experience.' I withdraw that. We want both. We want doctrine. That is a shape that will give itself to every child of God who receives it, rather, who is received by it as in the Romans Paul says "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." (Romans 6 v 17.) The text reads otherwise, but you will find in the marginal reading of your Bible, that is the reading- unto which you, as molten metal, melted by God's goodness, led by the Holy Spirit, run into that mould to take it's shape. That is a great truth. One might illustrate it by a word - This building for instance, what gives it it's shape? It's foundation. Nothing else. The shape of these walls, this building, is the foundation. So all true experience receives it's life and it's form and it's beauty and it's pleasantness to God from the Lord Jesus. May the Lord help us to believe it. In my last days I will, as God helps me continually bring before you the doctrine of the Scripture, which is the doctrine of God's Eternal goodness and love and purposes of salvation in His Son Jesus Christ.

Therefore the Apostle says the glory of God is by Him in the church world without end. Therefore take the whole of the scriptures, take particularly this Epistle in the preceding chapters, and this chapter, as expressive of what God is to his people; what He has given to them, what He has predestinated them to. Take all that, "Therefore I beseech you to walk worthy of that vocation wherewith God has called you." Think of it. The vocation. A divine call reached the heart in regeneration. The beginning of all vital godliness is in the new-berth. Yes, you will never do an act that pleases God if it do not proceed from this new life. This vocation is the divine call that effectually reaches the heart in the fulness of God's time. He allowed us to live in unregeneracy so many years. He allows some of us to live in the world. To be led by the devil, the god of this world, and though we might have been kept, some were kept from open immorality, there was all the immorality of unbelief. I have said before

now I would say it again, the greatest immorality that any human being is capable of, is infidelity, denying God. The day came when God put a stop to that. When He arrested some of us. When He made us believe that God is. When He took away the very root of evolutionism which we never have professed, which we never shall as being born of God. The vocation that called us out of the world, that world in which we lived. The vocation that called us to our senses, that opened our eyes to our state as sinners, that made us sensible of our hell deserving. The vocation that called us to our knees and taught us to pray, that made us feel we should be honoured if we could have a place by the publican if we could rank ourselves with the dying, penitent, praying thief, what an honour! What an honour would an earthly monarch, taught of God feel it to be, to be by the side of those great men of God, whose law and hell deserving brought them, - one to the cross to a violent just death, and the other to a conviction that he needed mercy. The vocation that called us to the throne of divine grace- "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." And the vocation that called us to that, tied us to the cross and made us say in our measure- "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." What is the ground of this? What is the ground of the exhortation? It is the mercy of God. What He has given. How He has dealt with us. We have that in the chapter I read. The mercies of God. There in the Romans were the mercies that those Roman christians had received.- Eternal election, justification by Christ. These were the mercies that issued in their experience in justification, in being free from condemnation; in walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh; in mortifying the deeds of the body, that they might live. Mortification of sin as expressed there and again in the Colossians means a disallution, a disallution between the sinner and his sinfulness and his sinning, not allowing that, that is done sometimes, as was the experience of the Apostle Paul- "When I would do good evil, is present with me and how to perform that which is good I find not," yet "it is no more I that do it," No more Paul the saint. No, and this distinction is made in experience even as it is stated in the Word of God.

I beseech you on this ground, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. What is this walk? First, the walk

of faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. When you walk by sight, by the sight of your weakness, your unbelief, by the sight of your troubles, your afflictions, your disappointments, the many grievous things in you, that happen to, or before you, when you walk by the sight of those things, you say- "Is His mercy clean gone for ever. Doth His promise fail for ever more. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He shup up all his bowels of mercy and compassion? Is His hand shortened that it cannot save? Will He show kindness to the dead? Then when you walk by faith you say- "This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right-hand of the Most High." Then you say- "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Then you look for the God of Jacob and believe and say- "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which keepeth truth for ever. Then you say- "I will wait for the Lord who hideth Himself." That is the walk of a child of God. Worthy of that call which has reached his heart, and taught him that God is love. You say "I cannot walk worthy of God." You can, and if you are a child of God you will by the sustenance of the Holy Ghost. You will walk by faith. Nothing pleases God more than an act of faith on the Saviour, by one who realises his utter unworthiness. Faith pleases Him. Faith is one eye of the church that does just please Christ, ravishes Him. Yes, but faith is the gift of God and faith in exercise stands in the power of God. Faith in exercise, if I may put it so, leaves the world, leaves trouble, looks to God, lives on Him, waits on Him, though the trouble remains, it is different. Though the burden is heavy, it is lighter when faith is in exercise. It is a worthy walk. Worthy of Him who has called the soul. Worthy of His blessed scripture, that speaks thus- "We walk by faith not by sight." When Abraham walked by sight, he said- "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless and my servant is mine heir." He walked by faith when hearing God say- "I will make thy seed more than the stars. More than the sand of the sea." and Abraham believed God. Do you believe Him? In your trouble, do you believe Him? In your afflictions do you believe Him? If you do, you walk worthy of your vocation. in that particular.

Secondly, they walk in love who walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Love all defects supplies. An afflicted person said that to me one day last week-

"Love all defects supplies,  
makes great obstructions small,  
Tis prayer, tis praise, tis sacrifice,  
Tis holiness, tis all."

"Blessed is he," said Jesus on one occasion, "whosoever shall not be offended in Me," You could not say you never have been offended in Him, could you, afflicted saint? What is one fruit of being offended with Christ? A painful readiness to rebel, to find fault with Him. May the Lord save us from being offended in Christ. "Great peace have they that love Thy law and nothing shall offend them." What if He does not send a message of love to you in your trouble.? If He does not draw near to you in the low dungeon for a time? What if He leaves you to the enemy to make, as it were, just a foot-ball of you? What if he leaves you in darkness, so that you do not know which way to take?- "What time I am afraid," said the good man, "I will trust in the Lord." And the exhortation is in Isaiah "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26 v 4.) and love says- 'I would fain do that.' Love is not offended when she is in exercise. It is written by the Holy Ghost in the Corinthians of charity (1 Cor. 13.v 5.) She is not offended. She believes everything that is good of God, of Christ, of the Spirit; acquiesces in all His dealings, and that is a worthy walk. It pleases Him. It ravishes Him.

To walk worthy of the vocation then, is to walk by prayer. "Praying always with all supplication." "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." O but some of us painfully know what it is to have an aversion to prayer. Turning away. Of the attractions, the inclinations toward wrong things and the distractions that come, even when you are on your knees and in the form of prayer, hardly can speak a word for your distractions, where your mind runs. If I were to speak of my own case in this particular, I should say that that is not an uncommon experience of mine. One seeks the Lord and ones heart goes after a hundred things. One expresses it thus- When you are trying to pray you have forgotten to pick up a pin. When you are praying I have found this- I have forgotten a certain letter to answer. Forgotten to do this and that. Everything and anything that will keep you from praying you will find coming on you, but says the Scripture-"In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." That is a worthy walk of the vocation. He says it-"Pray always." "Pray with the Spirit." "Praying in the Holy Ghost." "Open your mouth wide and I will fill

it." All these things are in this calling, this divine calling. And to walk worthy of the calling, is to walk in those things. Bring your troubles, O weeping soul. Bring your burdens O staggering soul. Bring your fears O fearing sinner. Bring them all by the help of the Spirit, to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and commit your way, commit yourself to the Lord.

Wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness. How ill-becoming is a high look to a christian man or woman. If you lift your head up O child of God, if you think more of yourself than you ought to think, God will put His hand on your high look and head, and you will go down. But lowliness, a man of low eyes; a man who thinks of himself as being less than the least of all saints, if he is a saint. A man who says sometimes at his table, when meat is placed before him - "Lord, I am not worthy of this meat. A man to whom comfort is given, he says- "I am not worthy of this. O it is a sweet feeling. It comes sometimes in trouble and you say - "I am only deserving hell. I am only fit for Thy anger, Thy displeasure and you go in a lowly spirit, tenderly, cautiously, you walk in the Spirit. Who is as vile as you? Who is as poor a christian as you? Who is as weak a believer as you? In all lowliness in the church of God and in your family.

And meekness. "A fool is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason." A meek person is a teachable person. The meek will He guide in judgement. The meek He teaches. Meekness? Why it is a bruized feeling. A tender lowly feeling. A broken feeling. A feeling that will bring you in trouble to say - "I was dumb. I opened not my mouth because Thou didst't it." Job was very meek when his trouble first came on him, and blind at the moment to second causes. He humbly, believingly, meekly said- "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

With long-suffering, forbearing one another. And this intimates to us this, that you have to do with wayward fellow members. That you have to do with some who are haughty, carnal, as were the Corinthians. I could not write unto you as unto children, as unto wise, but as unto babes, yea as unto carnal, and you have to bear with them. You may one day petulantly say:- 'I do not want to have anything more to do with so and so. I do not like the spirit manifested. I am afraid they are not walking according to God's truth. But Paul says:- "Walk with long suffering, forbearing with

them. Forbearing one another in love. Perhaps one day you will find this in your spirit if I may speak so- The telescope will be turned and instead of being set on your neighbour and on his or her inconsistencies, it will be turned upon yourself, upon your own heart and its moving and workings and lustings and bitterness and you will say- My inconsistent friend is not as inconsistent as I am, and that will bring you to walk forbearingly. Forbearing one another in love. Ah, it was a happy church that could have, written to it, these exhortations, and yet though so happy, there was need for these exhortations - "Forbearing one another, and not naturally, not stubbornly, but in love. Go back if you can with respect to one who does not please you, to the day when you received that one in love. Go back to the day when you found your heart thanking God for the grace bestowed upon him. That may help you to forbear with him in love. May the Lord bring this to us.

Endeavouring, -Which speaks difficulties to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

First a word on the unity of the Spirit. This is being a joint in the body as the Apostle speaks in this chapter- "From whom," that is Christ, the Head, the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working, in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying, building up of itself in love. That is the unity, the unity of the Spirit. A solemn, sweet union in Christ first, then in experience afterwards. Union by being born again and brought as a lively stone, to the living foundation. The living church of God has Christ for her foundation. Now that unity can never be broken, but it may as to its sweet blessedness, be interfered with by sin. Therefore says the Apostle- Endeavour to keep it. It is not a light thing to be united to the church of Christ, even to the visible church here and there, but to be united to that invisible church which is here, the body, the whole body joined fitly, bonded powerfully, as the bonding is great. These walls are bonded, bonded in a way that makes it possible for them to stand. Not two bricks put, each equal together, but a brick here and half a brick there and a whole brick again, they are bonded. Binding together. God brings this blessed bonding into his people's hearts and experience and then he says- "Now my people, be not offended one with another. Endeavour to keep this unity.

Do not think lightly of union with one another. You may do. You may have often done it. You may not be careful of the character of some member you spoke against. Christ was very careful of the character of Judas the brother of James, when Judas asked the Lord how it was that He would show Himself to his disciples and not to the world. It is written - "Judas not Iscariot." be as careful as you can about the character of your friends. Do not gossip about them. Remember whose ear is open to foolish talk and to malicious talk and to the damaging of the character of a fellow member. Keep. Hold fast. Care for this unity. Prize it as a gift of God to you. Value it as being His blessed work in you and in your fellows who are members as you believe of the invisible body, yea, of a visible church.

And what follows- "In the bond of peace."

"Peace by His cross,  
Has Jesus made."

That is the peace of God which passeth all understanding. That binds the soul to Christ, to God in Christ. That reconciles it to Him and to all His dealings with him, with the poor afflicted one.

There is another bond here spoken of - the bond of peace, which means walking in sweet accord one with another, and this means also walking in the doctrines of truth. You can never walk together if one of you be an armenion and another the man loving the doctrines of divine grace, but if two are Jews after the Spirit, holding the same God, the same gospel, the same Christ, the same justification, whatever comes in between of the flesh, which would bring discord, says the Apostle, endeavour to get away from that and keep the truth in the sweet bond of peace. Where this holds in a church there is peace.

What a comfort it is when a church meets as a church. When there is not a fear of seeing one another. What a comfort it is to a church, and how pleasing to God when it meets, and there is sweet accord in the truth, and love flows from one to the other, and each delights in his brother's good. These very trite sayings may seem to you hardly worth the breath that is required to utter them, but they have a place in the scripture and if they have a place there, surely it is worth our attention to hear them, and when the Bible is in our hands to read them. The Psalmist esteemed God's precepts altogether in all things to be right,



and therefore, by the power of them in his soul, he hated every false way.

Dear brethren, the Lord give us grace as a little church and every godly soul in the congregation to take narrow, careful, prayerful heed to this text. I beseech you, on the ground of what God has done for you, on the ground of the mercies He has bestowed upon you by the Spirit; on the ground of your experience of His love and of justification by the blood of Christ; I 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.

Now if there had been quarrelling among us, I do not think I could have ventured to speak from these words, but happily, through God's goodness there is no quarrelling so far as I know, but we are liable. We do not know what the devil may do, if permitted tomorrow, therefore may we be enabled to take very prayerful heed to this word-founded on what I have endeavoured lately to bring before you and may we find the whole to be of one piece- the glory of Christ in the church which binds the church to Him and fixes her habitation in heaven with Him throughout Eternity.

May the Lord forgive what has been amiss, and bless His precious truth to us and He shall have the glory.

Amen.

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