

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton on Sunday evening 4 January 1925

EPHESIANS VI verse 10

"Finally my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,"

Any strength but this that is here spoken about is nothing but weakness. Strength in yourself is weakness. Difficulties will come, enemies are abundant. They are ceaseless in their activities, in their aims to overthrow poor pilgrims, feeble soldiers, unaccustomed to war. The Holy Ghost has clearly revealed two things in the scripture respecting the church, first that she is in the wilderness, exposed to evils and dangers, and second that she has sufficient in the Lord for all things. That revelation being made in the heart of a sinner strengthens him mightily and enables him to fight the good fight of faith. Much of our weakness lies in our ignorance. We cannot always say we are not ignorant of the devices and the wiles of the devil. We are not always alive to the deceitfulness of sin in ourselves, and this our ignorance weakens us and exposes us to the enemy and much of the strength of the child of God in regard to warfare is this that, sensible of his weakness, his exposedness, his daily danger, he flies to the throne of God by prayer and pours out all his wishes there. It is an amazing thing to go to and get hold of God in prayer. For this we must have faith, faith that is of the operation of God. Faith that makes you a prince, gives to a princely spirit, princely courage. Faith that deals with God. Faith that, if He appears to be unwilling to give you a blessing will enable you to say to Him reverently and approvingly - I will not let Thee go. Before such faith, devils fly, difficulties vanish, principalities and powers are overcome and the way is made for the time being plain to the prince. As a prince thou hast power with God and hath prevailed. Jacob had power over the angel. Sometimes you will be able to bear the test that this may be in your own eyes and judgment of your religion and I give it to you as an evidence of a living child of God, that at times he has that princely spirit in him that will not take a denial, that has power over the angel and prevails. If you never have that you lack a very wonderful thing. You lack a feature of a child of God. You lack an evidence which in itself is very beautiful and very wonderful. The enemies are principalities and powers. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers

of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, and these enemies, these enemies warring against the Ephesians, are today warring against the saints of God. Spiritual wickedness. Wickedness meeting the wickedness of your nature. Wickedness touching the wicked principle of your heart. It may be idolatry suggested to you and it touches an idolatrous nature. It may be atheism in your mind and this spiritual wickedness will come in the form of atheism and touch your nature. It may be covetousness and that will reach something in you and away you will be caught. It may be presumption, daring blasphemy, and that coming on a nature possessing those very evils will bring them out into liveliness and into strength threatening your overthrow, and says Paul "We wrestle" Do you wrestle? He who yields always is not a fighter. The man who gives in, the man who yields to the tempter and finds himself carried away, has but very small evidence of knowing himself and having the armour of God. One says - but I do yield. Then shame follows and trouble and bondage. You will be sure to find, you will find, that as you sow in these things you will reap. Yielding will never bring you peace, will never help you on. It will not weaken your enemy. It will not strengthen you. It will just bring you, as I have said, into bondage. It will burden you with guilt. It will cripple you in your movements, it will bondage your spirit at the throne of grace. You will find the evil of yielding. This I painfully and shamefully know. A wrestler intends victory. He intends not to give in, but to overcome him with whom he is wrestling. And the difficulty is very great when, in a sense he does not see the man, the enemy, with whom he is wrestling and also very great when he comes to find that it is against principalities and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And against these enemies, here is a worm, a feeble believer. Here is one who can scarcely maintain his fighting at any moment according to his feelings, ready to give in. And yet, he has before him a crown, and he would fain fight so as to obtain the victory and to use another figure, so run, as to win. But he is confronted constantly, his difficulties are many. Now the advice of the Apostle is not get away from these enemies, it is not, run away from them. It is fight against them, wrestle. But how? Be strong in the Lord. Having given many exhortations in this Epistle, exhortations built on doctrine, exhortations to the children of the living God, He seems to put all up in this - Finally, to bring everything to a point - "I exhort you - Finally my brethren be strong in the Lord. And as enabled a little this evening I will speak

of the blessed strength of the Lord as it is in the sinner and of the power of His might, working. The energy of His might in the soul. And let us see if we can answer to this in any way, any measure, if we are at any time strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. And first of all this is to be noticed that if we are strong in the Lord, we are strong in faith. Now faith is a very daring, persevering grace, and as it is strengthened by the Lord and is strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus it has to do with many things. It has to do with sin, with defeats, with failures, with unworthiness, with guilt. It has to do with providential things. It has to do with apparent contradictions, with God's delays in fulfilling His promises, with a seeming contradiction in regard to a particular providence, and His particular leading. It has to do with these things. It has to do with the devil, wrestling against him, with spiritual wickedness in high places; the rulers of the powers of this world of darkness and who, realising the business that faith has in these particulars can do other than sink, give way, be ready to quit the field, if he has his eye on all these difficulties and enemies. O when you look within, when you look without, when you look at your troubles, when you look at what you think and feel, and sometimes believe God has spoken to you, and then regard the contradictions that come against that very thing, and the delays that try you, the delays of God. "I am glad" He said, afterwards, "for your sakes that I was not there". But O, why did He not go and prevent Lazarus from dying? And so you may feel. The difficulties and the contradictions will come against you and looking at them, how can you stand? The Lord does not say what some people would say to us these are all just imaginations. You have nothing to do now but believe and rejoice. The Lord does not say that. He says - you have these enemies, they are not imagination, you have them. They come against you and you have the counterparts of them in your own hearts, you have them. He is not running well who runs and thinks he has no enemies, when all these are about him. He is not fighting well, but only beating the air who fights without knowing the enemies he has to conflict with. Now says the Lord - Be strong" Look at this faith. Has it only to do with these enemies? Has your faith only got these enemies in view? O then if you are fainting it is no wonder. Why, what other object one may say? Who else is to be dealt with by faith? The God of all grace, the faithful God, wise, able, good, full, sufficient. Faith has to do with Him. Now we have some very illustrious

examples of the strength of faith given us in the scripture, and as the Spirit has said in the Romans, - "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Let us look at one or two of these things which are written. You take Abraham's case and two solemn occasions in his life brought faith out; Tried it, brought it out. One was, when he waited for Isaac, waited for twenty years for Isaac, and we are told in the New Testament, that he was strong in faith, that he staggered not through unbelief, but was strong in faith. He waited for the promised son, not without trouble, not without exercise. Who would believe that? But he waited, being strong in faith, because he counted God able, and that is a point. If ever you have real faith in exercise in any matter, this will be one of its strong points - God is able. I am not, you will say of yourself, I am not. I can do nothing. Faith will say - "God is able, He can give life where none appears possible." And the other occasion was, when Isaac was offered by his father "My son," said he to Isaac, respecting Isaac's enquiry - where is the lamb - "God is able to provide Himself a lamb". He was strong in faith. By faith, he offered up Isaac, and by faith he received him as from the dead, and he knew God was able to raise him again from the dead. Now these two occasions in the life of the father of the faithful, and the father of some here, show us what it is to be strong in faith. The hymn has it

"It laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done."

and this is what the Lord says. All things are possible to him that believeth. If you can lay hold of omnipotence, if you can lay hold of divine faithfulness to a promise, there is nothing you wont be able to do. The people which know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits. Your faith will carry your heart above natural impossibilities, above difficulties that confront you, above the weakness that is in you, and above all the things that declare it is impossible for this to come to pass, and it will lay hold of God. Do you know that in any little measure? If your faith lays hold of omnipotence, you will say, though He may put you off apparently, though He may speak to you as He did to the woman of Syrophenecia, you will say - true Lord, but I cannot give in. The dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. And you wont give in and one evidence of this is here, that you will again and again and again go to God about that very thing. Unbelief will say - It is no use. Faith says - I

must go again, and how often you will kneel in your heart, before the Lord. There is another very strong instance of faith, very striking, of faith in its great power in Moses, who laid hold of God. When Israel was sinning, had sinned, and brought the anger of God forth, you may remember how he pleaded with God and said to Him - What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name? What would God do in respect of some in this chapel if He did not fulfil some promises? What would He do? What would He do to His great Name? I would speak of it with reverence. What would become of God's character if some of you were left to fall short? Sin says you ought to do. Your conscience says that is true. But faith says He told me He would bless me. He told me He would not leave me, and when faith lays hold of that there is something to plead. I thought coming to chapel this evening that I got just a little hold of a thing that God told me some years ago, and faith said - Lord do fulfil it. When you can get hold of God in a word that He said to you, this is being strong in faith. Through faith you will hold on your way, and through faith you will, may I say it, you will hold God to His word. You will war in weakness, you will dare in doubt, and you will understand a little of what it is for God and a sinner to be together in a wonderful friendship, wonderful unity, a promising God, a pleading faith. A promising God and a faith that cannot give up what He has promised. Hold it fast poor sinner. God help you, God help me. People tell us we should not look at what is inside but if they had something inside they would look at it. If you have got a word in your heart you will look at it. Your faith will never never be blind to it whenever it is in proper exercise.

Now I will take you to another instance in the scriptures, even to Jacob. He knew what tribulation meant, but he knew what faith meant also. How he took his faith to God. But the instance to which I will call your attention, is the instance of his returning to his father's house in obedience to God's commandment and the promise was that God would be with him and deal well with him in his return, and he had a very weakening providence, a painful, trying, weakening providence, a difficulty, an enemy coming in between him and the destination to which he was going. His face was toward his home and there came a difficulty in the way and he realised it. He felt it. His conscience was lively. He remembered what had happened many years ago, even his deceiving of his blind father and wronging his elder brother. Now what is he to do. His faith says - deal with God. He goes to his God. Lord, said Thou hast told me to return to my father's

house, has promised to be with me and deal well with me, but now my brother is coming to meet me with four hundred men. And you may depend upon it there were four hundred swords, there and four hundred ready to pierce that poor man. Lord, I am afraid, said Jacob, I am afraid of my brother, afraid of Esau. Are you afraid of yourself? Are you afraid of some providence, afraid of something that has come in between you and the promise that God made over to you? Then your faith being genuine, being the gift and work of the Holy Ghost will go now at its proper business, and to its proper end, even God, and here is Jacob's princely spirit. There came a Man and wrestled with him, and as the day began to break the Man said "Let Me go," and Jacob's faith rose and said "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." But he got a touch which crippled him for the rest of his days, and you will get a touch that will cripple your old nature. But still that will be the case, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." "Be strong in the Lord." You see these instances given for us, for our instruction, tell us what faith does, and they do illustrate that passage-"To him that believeth, all things are possible." Four hundred men dealt with by a poor man on his knees. You think of it. Death dealt with by faith. Contradiction, apparent contradiction of a promise, dealt with by faith. This is being strong. If you know your own nature, the doubts and fears that would rise, you will understand and be able to a little realise, what Jacob felt when he was confronted by an enemy. But O his faith was a living faith, and he had power over the Angel and prevailed. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Only a believer can understand what that power is, which at times comes on a soul, on this blessed faith, to stir it, move it, strengthen it, direct it, encourage it, and bring it to God, the Promiser, to plead with and deal with Him in respect of that which was promised.

Now I will direct you to another case even David. He had many difficulties between the pouring of the oil, the anointing oil on him by Samuel, and his sitting on the throne to which he was thus anointed. There came years of trouble. You think you are tried. Look at David. Years of trouble after he was anointed. The best blessings are often succeeded by the greatest trials, and David was not always strong in his feelings about matters. Once he said to his friend - "As the Lord liveth there is but a step between me and death, so low had he got. So far from fulfilment to his faith was this blessed anointing, that he could not look for it. Yet there was a time, when he could say to the Lord - "Do as Thou hast said," He was brought to the throne, and then

further communications were made to him as he was king, and it was told him, that the Lord would build him a house, make him a house for a great while to come, and that gave him a singular standing, and warrant before the Lord. So he goes in as we read - "Then went king David in and sat before the Lord and said - "Who am I O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto." When you get something from God, God will get something from you. When he speaks to you, your faith will speak to Him, and when your faith speaks to Him, He will listen and receive it, and you will thank Him and bless Him. 'Do as Thou hast said.'

There are many very beautiful and illustrious instances of the power of faith, that blessed faith that God gives, but I must pass on, not to notice these, but just to say a few other words. Faith now is strong in this particular. It waits. It waits on God.

Haste, grasps at all, and nothing keeps.

If you have got real faith, you will never really wholly leave God. There is union between a living soul, and a living God, and that union is known and realised at times by faith in its working. Hence the visits, shall I say, constant visits, and they are constant as to the aim and desire of the soul, constant visits of the sinner to the throne of grace. Who can help you but God? Faith says nobody can. Who can bring you honourably through? Only God. Who can stand by you in the hour of temptation? Only God. Who can sustain your soul and maintain it in life? Only God. And faith, telling you this, will point out the way to Him - the throne of His heavenly grace.

"Thy mercy-seat is open still;
Here let my soul retreat;
With humble hope attend Thy will,
And wait beneath Thy feet."

"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait I say on the Lord." This is a steadfast grace, a God-honouring grace, a soul comforting grace, from time to time.

Now the next thing on this point that I will name to you is this - I know it for myself. I know, and that is, that this faith will always justify God in everything He does. In His withholding, in His giving, in His chastening, in His comforting, in everything He does. God is great to faith, good, right, just, to faith. No fault to be found in Him. My nature finds fault with Him, so does yours. Faith does not. No, faith says He is right, He is good, just, and upright. His way is perfect. What a wonderful thing it is to be strong enough to do this. Be strong in the Lord.

Now let me name, and it must be very briefly, a second grace, namely

love, The scripture makes a great deal of love, God being the fountain of it. And, giving His love to His people, He begets love to Himself in them. "We love Him because He first loved us" Now brethren, this is a beautiful grace. It is a warm attachment of a believing heart to a gracious God, an attachment that will make Him the best, the most lovely, the most glorious, the most desirable object to you. A grace that will never find any fault with Him, that will believe all things, hope all things, bear all things, never behave itself unseemly toward Him, or any creature. It is a beautiful grace, this grace of love. It will lead you to honour Him, worship Him, trust Him, praise Him, look on Him, hanker after Him, desire His company above all else. You will seek Him by night, you will seek Him by day, if you love Him, and when you cannot find Him then you will go about the city crying out - "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" You will want Him. A hungry religion is a good religion. It is a religion of love, hungering for Him, who is the object of love. A hungry religion will take you through difficulties, and bring you from time to time, before this blessed God. It will take you, to where you have a hope of finding Him, to the scriptures and to the ministry if there be one where you live. It is a grace that is beautiful. Christ thought much of it, when He sent the message to John, who had sent to Him saying - "Art Thou He that should come or look we for another." Tell John what you have seen and heard, and then say - "Blessed is He whosoever shall not be offended in Me". Why should we be offended in Christ? Why, nature says, He does not care. Unbelief says, He keeps away so long, and does such strange things. Blessed is he, whose love is such, as not to be offended with a delaying God, with a silent Saviour, for when the Saviour is silent to a person for a time, He is silent for a reason, a good reason. Be strong in the Lord. Old nature has no such thing as pure spiritual love in it, and if you have got this real article, this wonderful love in your soul, there will be many things to damp it, but as nothing could quench the love of Christ, so really, nothing can quench the love of the soul, because the Lord replenishes it. In the power of His might. That is, in the working of God in the soul, the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, bringing new supplies from Christ's fulness, to the sinner.

"My brethren" says the Apostle "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." I might just add this, namely, be strong in prayer. The prayer of faith shall save the sick. If you can pray, if you can move on your knees, in all matters in which you can and do so move, you will make good progress. Haste will grasp at all. Prayer

will deal with God. Prayer is worship, prayer is begging, prayer is pleading. It is urging, it is arguing with God. Prayer is taking a hungry soul, an empty hand, an empty purse, an empty spirit, a weak creature to the throne of God's heavenly grace. It is just going with the things you feel to need. Weakness here, trouble there, sin everywhere and prayer says, - There is an open door, one blessed resource, one gracious God, and to Him I will go. Thy mercy-seat is open still. And when you are strong in the Lord you will be taking advantage of this. Plenty of work for prayer if only we have prayer. Plenty of work. A body of sin and death, a resisting spirit, a hating spirit, a tempting devil, an overcoming lust. Here is work for prayer. Providential troubles, sickness in your house, or in your person, sickness in your business, sickness everywhere perhaps at times. Plenty of work for prayer if you have prayer, and if you have prayer there is a God who hears it. Yes, if you have a living cry, God has an open ear, and if you have an open mouth, He has an open hand, and you will never ask in vain. No affectionate parent would mock a child who asks for bread by giving him a stone, and you will find, that when you can ask, God is ready to give. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might". Amen.