

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
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Text: Ephesians 6 v 13

"Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God,  
that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day  
and having done all, to stand"

The safety of the election of grace is nowhere in the scripture a matter of question or doubt. Every member of the body of Christ must reach heaven. An imperfect body is impossible. The purchase of Christ must be in heaven; he can never lose part of His purchase, that blessed One who purchased the church with His own blood. "Seven deaths and hells" to use Rutherford's word, cannot keep one weak believer out of heaven. No, nor sin done, nor backsliding indulged in will keep such people out of heaven, but they will get hell here, they will get many a blow, many a rod, many a rebuke in their consciences, for sin is not to be cheap to us. Bunyan speaks of preaching what he smartingly felt. He said "I did smartingly feel", and when I say to you that a backslider wont be kept out of heaven for his backsliding, I say this, and I can say it smartingly, he gets the rod. I have had it. He gets the rod. O believer, dear child of God, be afraid, beg of God to keep your feet, beg of Him to bless your soul with liveliness, with exercise, and I say that, not because you, being a believer, are in danger of hell, but you certainly are in danger of a solemn dispensation if you indulge sin. I make this observation as a sort of preliminary to what I have to say with regard to this fighting. "Fight the good fight of faith". Take to yourselves the whole armour of God. You have devils, men, errors and all kinds of things to resist you. You will find more or less that every step of the way to heaven will be to you more or less a pain, a difficulty. Enemies will stand in the way, an Appollyon will resist you, but God has provided an armour, a wonderful armour, a perfect panoply, nothing lacking in it. May we have skill to use it. It is not an easy thing. To get to heaven to the believer, is no easy walking. It is easy

for God to take him there, but not easy to his experience to get there. Make the distinction, for it is an important one in respect of doctrine and also of experience. I made a few observations and O they were feeble I know, with regard to the armour, this complete armour, covering the body, defending the head, and the feet and putting into the hand a sword that can never be turned aside really and never prove ineffectual. But this armour is not to be hung up in your room and admired, not to be kept well burnished for friends to admire. Ah it will be covered with blood, if I may speak so. It will be put to a test. If any of you people are asleep you have got some rude awakening, but if you are awake and lively you will find that there is a devil also awake. You will find also a devil of sin in your hearts wide awake. You will find also the world as much opposed to Christ today in Christendom as He was opposed in Jewry when He sojourned there. I wonder if any of you are afraid, if you are afraid of your state, of your standing, of your present condition. I do believe that I shall reach heaven one day, but I am much afraid of what I have between me now and heaven. Afraid of sin. How suitable that prayer was to me the other day - "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". But some may say, surely you have got beyond that kind of thing. No, I do not expect to get beyond the enemy's violence, craft, and power till I come to the end, and if the Lord shines on me then, and I do not go out in darkness, it will be an answer to many prayers. O beware of trust ill grounded.

Now the enemies are these, first the devil. He was in the first sin, the subtle serpent, more subtle than any beast of the field which God had made. He has many wise stratagems, snares, pitfalls, to catch, wound and, if possible, destroy, the saints of God. You think, perhaps, you are beyond that question with which he plied poor, innocent Eve. "Hath God said?" O, you say, of course I know He has said. He has given the scriptures. Yes, but suppose he should come to you and whisper "Hath God said?" Is the Bible true? Has He spoken to you? He may say it, he may whisper it. It may drop first upon your ear with some alarm, then that alarm will cease and you will begin to listen. "Hath God said?" Hath He said what Genesis tells us about the

creation? Has He said what the scriptures tell us about the incarnation of the Eternal Son of God? Has He said what the scriptures affirm, that God made His holy Son Jesus to be sin? Has He really said that the curse came on Christ, that Christ died the death of the curse, the curse of God's holy law? And has He said you must be very particular about your walk? May you not be a little freed here? May there not be a little licence there? Hath God said? Has He said with regard to the public worship "Be your behaviour becoming the place" Do you think that the sin of irregularity in the church of Corinth died with that church? Have not you been irregular sometimes? Could every gracious person in this congregation say they had never planted a tree on Sunday, never looked into your ledger on a Sunday, never decided on any pleasure on a Sunday, never sat thinking of the pleasure they were going to get tomorrow. Not literally, of course, but how about the heart? What about your thoughts? You heard a voice in the pulpit but you paid no heed to it. The pleasures you were anticipating filled your mind. And this is an enemy. Self-wisdom is an enemy; self-guidance is an enemy; self-support is an enemy, and you have got the enemy, I have. He lives in us. Happy the man who resists him, who has got his loins girt about with the truth of the gospel, who has on him the breastplate of righteousness, who has the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace on his feet to make him firm in his standing. Happy the man who has the helmet of salvation for his defence and blessed is the man who has the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit.

Now resistance of this enemy, fighting this enemy, seems to be this, that when he comes to you to distract you from the service and the worship of God, or when you are in your closet, praying in secret, or when you are reading the scriptures, to distract your attention from them, it seems to be this.- to entreat the Lord to keep your heart and mind, to fix and keep your eye on the Lord Jesus. Resist the devil of sin, this particular sin. O the weakness of our hearts. O the weakness of my heart. I can smartingly say it, the weakness of the heart. A bit of tinsel dangled before the silly, bewitched, eye of a believer is enough to carry him away from the riches of the Lord

Jesus for the time being. Do you know this enemy? His wicked face, do you know? His awful insinuations are you acquainted with? Resist this. This armour is for use my friends, this enemy is to be slain. One of two things will happen in this particular, either this enemy will lay you down for a good while perhaps or you will thrust the sword of the Spirit into him. Fight the good fight of faith in this particular. Have you ever quenched the Spirit? Have you ever grieved the Spirit? Sacred motions moving you to desire to seek the face of God, or to read His Holy Word, or to seek fellowship with any saint, motions of that holy nature may have again and again come. And what have you done? Let me go and bury my father. A plea, a natural plea. Let me attend to this, let me look after that. This is my duty, I must do this, it is my duty. And O the subtlety of it, as it has caught some of us. Perhaps I have had a longer experience than any other person in this chapel in some particulars, if not in all, and this is an experience of which I speak out of a painful experience, very painful. The word is "Quench not the Spirit". See my friends, go back if you can in your memories. Have you been good soldiers of Jesus Christ and said to these things hinder me not. Well, that is a good man, a favoured man who can say he has consistently resisted this sin and used the armour, the whole armour of God. An imputed righteousness, defending his heart, and the light of the Spirit being to him a guide, and the helmet of salvation defending his head. Well now that is another point.

Yet a third thing is this - you must resist error, error of doctrine. One may say to me instantly, mentally, well but we hold fast the doctrine. You may, and yet be filled with the spirit of error. Probably very few today have suspected the spirit of error, particularly about the letter perhaps, but the spirit of error, how it may catch you. In the Corinthians we find the Apostle Paul speaking about preachers - "Are they ministers, so are we". Now you will find probably much may come to you, much may reach your ears. Some men may be saying - now we are Calvinists, but we want to preach Christ. I believe that voice is coming into our denomination, has come. Preach Christ. A very taking thing, yearning for souls, as they say. Very

taking that is. Preach Christ. You can hear it, you can read it, I have. I know it is among us. Well what is wrong about that? Be very careful and resist it in this armour. But what is wrong about preaching Christ? Nothing, if the preaching is right, He is right, but to preach Christ without preaching the malady, to preach Him, without preaching the need of Him, to preach Him without preaching what He did, and what He does, and what He is doing and how that He is a plaster for a sore boil, a remedy for a malady, a Saviour for the lost, a King for one who would be a subject, a brother for one who is in adversity; to preach Him in His compassion; to preach Him in His holy approaches to the soul, saying - "open to Me my sister  
.....for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night"; to preach Him in His faithful love and mercy, this is different. Nothing perhaps is easier than to be constantly crying out - Christ, Christ, Christ, but the Lord Jesus has told us that this shall be - They shall be saying - Lo here is Christ, lo there is Christ and He says "Go not after them" Mind the spirit of a thing - the spirit of truth, the spirit of error. God give to us discernment in things which differ. Discernment of a spiritual thing will be where there is a spiritual taste, a spiritual appetite. Fight this. O what is there to fight. Resist it, turn from it, and look at that in the spirit of it - "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" This Man justifieth the ungodly; this Man cleanses the polluted; this Man gives the adoption of sons to His people by the Spirit of adoption. This Man spreads a table for hungry people and says to them "Eat O friends and drink" This Man is a brother born for adversity, and this Man, this blessed Man goes where two disciples are walking together, having sad communications, and asks them what it is that ails them and draws out their complaint and makes known to them Himself. Look for this my friends, look for this.

Yea, God grant that we may more and more remember what the Apostle John writes - the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. An internal thing, an influence, a real influence. Error has an influence; error hardens, error makes the holder of it impatient; error makes a man proud, error of spirit all the while he may be talking about the doctrine. The spirit of truth humbles. The truth of God maketh God great; it

makes the sinner dust and ashes; it makes God's condescension melting; it makes His compassion wonderful. The spirit of truth unites the person to the truth; it brings him to lie flat before God, to humble himself under the mighty hand of God from time to time. Hold fast that which thou already hast that no man take thy crown.

Now just a word here about a church. An armour, the armour of God, may be used for that state. "Let no man take thy crown" says God. The crown of a church state 'Tis very solemn to me in these my latter days, it is very solemn, and many an hour in the night when perhaps, and I hope, you are all fast asleep, this church is on my heart before God. Your state, whether you are exercised, whether you are seeking God, whether you are tender in your consciences, whether you are humble, whether you are kept lively and I am, putting myself always in it, praying - do keep us. I have seen many changes here. How many more I shall see, the Lord only knows, but one change I have often thought about I have not seen, and hope I may not, God has not left us, as far as I know and can judge, to receive and walk in any error. Now brethren, hold fast what you have got, fight for it. It may bring much reproach to you, but that God will see to. Hold fast what belongs to a church state, the truth for a foundation, the truth for a girdle, the truth for nourishment, the truth to guide you, the truth to feed and help you, to comfort your hearts. The truth to be in your spirits so as to make you walk in the truth according to what John said in his second epistle or third, I forget which, at this moment - "I have no greater joy than that my children walk in the truth". It indeed is very solemn. May the Lord keep us as a people. You cannot expect me to remain much longer with you according to my time of life. It becomes me to be looking every day, more or less, into my state and to ask if I am just ready to depart and it will become you to beg of God to keep us as a church, that we may not turn aside to any vanity or any wrong things, to keep the eye on God. If your eye be kept on God, if my eye be kept on God, we shall be rich, we shall be safe. I hope the Lord wont let us go to sleep. I will try as He

helps me to keep you awake by prayer and preaching that you may be exercised concerning God. Why do I say this to you? Do I say it because there are painful things prevailing? I do not know that there are. I do not know that there are. I can say this, I believe that every man here is full of sin, myself full of sin. That is one thing. To practice sin is another thing, and I do not know, I would be thankful, to say it, I do not know that anybody is at this moment living in open sin, I do not know it. But I do know this that we are in danger because we have enemies innumerable. And where are they chiefly? In the heart in my heart, in your hearts. "Fight the good fight of faith" How can I? Here is the armour.

Now the next enemy for me to name is the world. Well, but surely one may say, we are cut off from the world. If that be so you are favoured. The world. It was very near to Israel, and God put a wall of precept, admonition and commandment round that nation and it was to be their interest to walk according to God's Word and within the limitations that He had put. O the divine statutes, the limitations that God has given. What did Israel do? Broke through, and they found that to be true - "He that breaketh through a hedge, a serpent shall bite him." And the enemies of Israel went on biting the people because they broke through the hedge. Now in Ezekiel's vision of the temple, we are told that there was a wall round about the whole of that city. That city represents the church of God. There are so many difficulties in a literal interpretation that you cannot well literally interpret it. To begin with, the temple itself was joined to Palestine but the wall is this - a separation - and the prophet says round about the whole mount is this law, holiness. God has put that round his church and behind, on the other side of the wall, is the world. You have the same divine truth solemnly expressed in the Revelation where a measuring rod was given to the angel and the commandment was - measure the temple and the altar and they that worship therein, but the outer court, measure it not, the world, yet worshipping in the outer court, a religious world, a profane world. We are not in danger, it may very well be we are not in danger of attending a theatre and these open practices that the whole world is now mad about but we

are in danger of the religious world. What about the man who cunningly and subtly talks about evolution and destroys the blessed description of God's work in six days in the creation? And what about the man who denies the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus, who denies the holy incarnation of the Person of the Son of God? And the Anglo-Catholic, wanting to bring in Romish doctrine and doing it in the national church. What about the critic standing in the pulpit and daring to cut this blessed book to pieces, and throwing the pieces into the fire of his natural anger? We have got to fight against these things my friends, and I would, and I do, seriously, solemnly, warn you - do not listen to these things. But if they come before you resist them - Thus saith the Lord. Use, as well as you can, the sword of the Spirit. The world. It would do us good if the prayer of the Lord Jesus recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John were made known to our souls, that petition particularly, at this moment, bearing on my point, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth". O may we listen to these solemn petitions of the glorious God Man, Jesus Christ, the Intercessor, and may we remember in that prayer the solemn declaration of the Saviour - "I pray not for the world". Think of it. "I pray not for the world." I have a very godly friend in Scotland who, when a boy, sitting by his mother's side on a brow in the the far north of Scotland, was reading to her in the Gaelic tongue, the seventeenth chapter of John, and when he came to that - "I pray not for the world" his godly mother sighed a deep sigh and said O poor world, and God made that the arrow of conviction in his youthful conscience. Separation, my friends, separation, separation from the world, that is the keynote of the petition. "I pray not for the world" Sanctify them, keep them from it; keep them from the evil of it, from the spirit of it. Why you may be in the spirit of it now, some of you gracious people, and you may be saying - I am going to do such and such a thing tomorrow, and I have such and such a pleasure before me. Yes, well God be with you in it and if He is not with you in it, can you hope in it? Resist it, fight against it. If your eye be on God you will be safe, but if it be on yourself you



are in danger.

Now the third thing for me to notice is the last great enemy who is the first in the context "For 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; wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God". A world of devils. Spiritual blessings in heavenly places and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. In the third chapter of Genesis we are told that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which God had made, and in pronouncing His awful curse on the serpent God said - "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Now this sets out, as I think, the whole of the world's enmity, the whole of the devil's enmity, and the whole of the enmity of our nature against the Son of God. It is all wrapped up in that, the enmity between the two seeds, the seed of the woman, the church of God, and the seed of the serpent, the whole lost world. We soon get tired of trouble and of fighting, but the devil is never tired, never tired. If you think you know one of his particular ways of temptation so as almost to think now he wont come this way again, you may find that already he is at another gate effecting, or seeking to effect, an entrance there. O the subtlety of the devil, the wiles of the devil which the Apostle Paul here speaks about - the wiles of the devil. If you are given to reasoning, then his wiles will come that way. He may reason about the nature of God, and set out before you that the persistence and prevalence of evil in the world are inconsistent with a good nature, and he may come to you in this way - now you would not allow such and such things if you could avoid them. Can you think God will? This is a wile. O you will need grace to fight this. You will need a great deal of grace to stand here. You will need the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace to keep your feet firmly fixed on the ground of God's goodness, and the goodness of His nature, the eternal goodness of His nature, that whatever He permits must be right, though we cannot understand it, that it must be right because He, the holy God, has permitted it. If you are not

troubled that way, there may be another wife of his. Perhaps the beginning of the work in you was not very distinct. Perhaps now it is all shut out from your view. Perhaps you might be saying mentally - I do not know. I did think God blessed me but I do not know now, I am not sure. And he may make it seem quite proper for you to cast all away that you once believed God wrought in you. A subtle thing this, to destroy your peace and were it possible, your soul. A subtle thing. And he may wilily point out to you that you nurse sin, that you have corruptions, that you have a temper, that you are determined to have your own way. He may point out to you a variety of things. Now look at these, how can you think a christian could have these and indulge in these sins? It would be impossible for me to tell how often I have had that kind of reasoning about my own case. You, a christian, you dare to think yourself a christian, with all these sins. Your friends do not know them, but you know them and God knows them. But if the Lord has loved you, and if He has given you some evidence of that, then may He help you to hear what the Spirit says to the churches "Hold fast that which thou already hast" "Remember how thou hast received and heard and hold fast" and ask the Lord to keep you from casting away what is right but to confirm it, to give you more than you have ever had, bless you with an increase of grace. Resist the devil in that particular. Or he may come, not subtly, not wilily, but violently. He may come and, as if it were a little thing for him to suggest that there is no help for you in God, he may boldly say - there is no God. And of all the painful things you can have hurled into your heart and mind, this is one of the most painful - there is no God. How can you resist it? O do not try to resist it by argument. You will find if you have a little bit of logic, the devil has a great deal more. Do not try to argue the point with him. Fall down, take, if you can, this blessed sword, and thrust it, if you can, at Satan and say - Verily there is a God who is holy, whose works are perfect, just and right is He. Evidences. Well now where are they? Go to creation and they are there. Look at providence, they are there. But the best is this - what God has done for you in your soul. What scriptures He has made spirit and life to you. What deliverances He has wrought for you. What answers to prayer He has given you. What witnesses in

your own heart you have had, what melting, what sensations of the love of God you have had. O these, as you can thrust them at the enemy will prove a sword that he cannot resist. "Fight the good fight of faith". Eye the Saviour, look to God and all will come out well. He may not come to you like that. He may come and stir up, being permitted, the awfulness of your nature, and make your heart like a troubled sea when it cannot rest, casting up mire and dirt and what a plight you will be in then. A man who can say and often has said before God - "I would be holy", for that man to come and say, of all the unholy things on the face of the earth, my heart is the unholyest, this is painful. It may make you afraid to go where the people of God are. It may make you afraid to move, afraid to speak. It may make you afraid to pray lest you should mock God. It will make you afraid to open the Bible lest the pollution of your heart should spread over the sacred page. Everything is affected in your mind by the present corruption that is stirred up. And what can you say? Lord, I am a weak creature, and worse, I am a polluted, awful, creature. Well this is one of the wiles of the devil, but it may be so with you that you are full, so full of confusion, that you wont be able to distinguish the voice. You will think, it is my own voice, it is myself, my own voice, my own thoughts. Oh how hard you will find it to be then to keep your eye on God. Resist this devil, and if you can say, well, I am filthy, it is true. I am like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, casting up mire and dirt. I am everything my conscience accuses me of being, and I do everything in my heart that conscience tells me I do, yet I will venture to go to the throne of grace, I will venture to ask the Lord to save me. I will venture to say to Him that He is the Saviour of the lost and to say that I believe a sinner is capable of being saved. I believe that forgiveness is with Him and I will ask Him to save me and to forgive my sins. I have no excuses to offer, no extenuations to plead. I will just lie flat before God in this, my bad state, and acknowledge the worst and ask for the best. I will say to Him - I deserve hell, would it please His divine majesty to give me heaven.

Take the whole armour of God. Take what the blessed Spirit has written here, use it, plead, pray, thrust at the enemy and

decline by the help of God, decline to entertain the conclusions the devil thrusts in upon your mind.

Well now, these three enemies are not to be despised, at least not at present. The daughter of Zion will despise them one day, but, so long as she is weak, and these enemies are strong, so long as she is like two little flocks of kids, while the Assyrians, the enemies, fill the whole country, so long will there be a weakness felt and a fear and a need for using this divine armour. The Lord give us skill and wisdom to do it. The Lord help us in His great love and mercy to stand fast in the evil day and to withstand.

Now my friends, one word in conclusion. You have been knocked down perhaps many a time, you have been laid very low by your enemy, you have had many a deadly thrust, and got many a wound, and a good deal of shame and disgrace in your spirit before God, but there is one thing before you. Every weak, every poor, every shameful, defeated believer has one thing, that is a crown, a crown, a crown of glory. Said Paul "I have fought a good fight". You may say, I have not, but as long as God helps you to hang on Jesus Christ by faith, there is a fight, for the devil tries to pull you away from Him. I say, there is a crown. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out". Think of it. "Hold fast that which thou already hast, that no man take thy crown". This blessed crown of righteousness is before every praying person, every praying person. Lord give us grace to fight. Do not think little of your enemies, but think much of the Captain of your salvation. Do not pour too much on your weakness, but think upon the mighty God. He is able, He is willing, doubt no more. Now if the observations I have ventured to make, weak as they are, should be at all appropriate to the case of any person, and God should make them useful, then it will not have been in vain for me to draw your attention to so great and so wonderful a subject. as the text brings before us. May the Lord in His great mercy look on us and help us, and think upon our afflicted friends. So many are absent from us through affliction. May the Lord bless them and bless those who are at home attending to them, and give

us, as a people, a spirit of prayer, love and union and grace to  
walk humbly before, and with, God.

AMEN.