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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday evening 11 November 1934

GALATIANS 5 v 1

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith  
Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled  
again with the yoke of bondage"

If it were not written by inspiration we might doubt even the sincerity of the powerful and blessed minister of Christ, the Apostle Paul speaking as he does in this Epistle of his discouragements. In the first chapter, as you remember, he says to these brethren, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." It is evidently a very solemn thing for people who have been called to lend their ear to every sort of teaching, which should make you very jealous as to what you hear. Christ says - "Take heed what ye hear" and further "Take heed how ye hear". Error more readily enters into the mind of man than truth. A gospel which sets men to work is more acceptable to professors, to religious people, than the gospel which says you have nothing to do; you can do nothing; the Son of God did everything for you and He brings that everything to you by His Spirit. It was very discouraging evidently in this Epistle that the Apostle felt when he looked on these Galatians who, at one time, would have given him their eyes, as he testifies, to find them turning away and even regarding him as an enemy because he told them the truth. One deduction may be made here, this namely, be very careful about your hearing, about how you receive, and what you receive and very careful with regard to any influence that may come upon you that would divert your attention from the holy gospel of Jesus Christ. Be very watchful; take heed; be sober; be vigilant. You do not know how quickly you may be turned aside from the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, no, I could not, but then you could if God left you. There is nothing bad in the world that a child of God may not be left to if, for a test and for the ultimate glory of God, he was just left for an hour, yea for a minute, yea for a pleasant walk on the housetop in the cool of

the evening. Beware of self, dear friends; be very careful of your hearings. Watch narrowly the effect of all teaching on your souls. I have lived long enough and preached as you know for many years; I have seen some precious saints die here, buried them; a chapel full of people practically I have buried. O the blessed ends of many. And now I am old and have got close to my end and I am discouraged by some of you. I had hoped well of some; I am not without hope now, but the fickleness of some and the very difficult way of some have made me doubtful and discouraged, greatly discouraged by some. May the Lord look upon us as a people. I thank Him that still there is a remnant. Blessed be His Name there are a goodly number I trust and believe who hunger for God and I say to you who do thus live, thus wait on Him, seek to be steadfast in your spirit and the Lord give you that which you seek. My text is an important one: "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

As enabled I shall treat this word first doctrinally. There is a great doctrine in this text and I would, as helped, speak about that doctrine. "Doctrine", as I have often quoted to you, Luther said "Doctrine is heaven". It contains everything that is necessary to fit us for heaven. The doctrine expressed, implied in this text, is the doctrine of the liberty which Christ procured for His church; that the law, under which these Galatians were, even as we naturally are, held them fast. They had neither right nor power to deliver themselves. I named this point this morning, we have no right, we are God's creatures and His subjects. He created man in His image and His likeness; a wonderful thing that the creature should have the likeness of God in his nature; the very image of God in his nature. It is in my opinion very difficult, if not impossible, for us as sinners to realise what that word means; the image and likeness of God. This may be said, without fear of contradiction, that it means man was made very pure, that he had knowledge of good, that his whole heart was God's, that he had a natural, a beautiful delight in God, that he could bear the presence of God. Yes, doubtless every evening in the cool of the day God would walk in the garden and Adam walked with Him. Very wonderful. I have thought of it at times and tried to conceive it but I am always at a loss because it is something that is beyond all our present condition, aspiration and knowledge, because

we are fallen creatures. But the law, the holy, just and good law of God remains the same. We Gentiles have not the law that the Jews had in the form of it, but we all have the law written in our hearts and we do the things of the law which is written in our hearts and we show the work of the law; that is the nature and the claim and the power of the law we show when our consciences accuse or excuse. These Galatians were, as we at Galeed are, under the law. That law, being God's, has dominion over us. That law we have broken, but its authority remains. Its power to accuse and to condemn continues. We cannot liberate ourselves. If this is entered into by any of us here it fills us with fear and bondage and dread. What can we do being under the law that cannot excuse us, that cannot give us life, that cannot justify us, but can do this one thing, slay us and plunge us into hell. What can we do in such a case?

Now the Lord sent His Son; in the fullness of time He sent His Son made of a woman, made under the law. Just for a moment think of that last word - "made under the law". And being a Man He was capable of receiving the law and it was in His heart, as you have it in the Psalm He says "Thy law is within My heart". By His divine and infinite mercy in love He did what He was capable of doing. He received not only the law in His heart, but the transgressions of the law which had been committed by those given to Him to save. He received all that. It is expressed thus by the Apostle Paul - "He hath made Him" - His Father that is - "to be sin for us who knew no sin" A very solemn consideration that; His Father made Him, His holy Son, to be sin, though in Himself, in His glorious Person, He knew no sin. And then that brought Him under the curse of the law. Having the sin done by the men given Him to redeem laid on Him, He was under the law in its terrible sanction. Cursed is the man under the law. That curse was poured like fire into the bones of the Son. Yea an ocean of wrath in awful billows went over Him. "All Thy waves and thy billows are gone over Me." The Saviour died; Jesus died, and having finished the work His Father gave Him to do, He said "It is finished". That gives liberty. When the law of England has its full power over a murderer, that is the law hangs him, the man is dead and the law can do no more; it is just finished; it has no more power over that man. So when Christ came under the law and its curse was poured on Him and He died, fulfilling all, then the law could do no more. Just think of it

in the doctrine of it, the law could do no more. There was Christ on the cross - voluntarily He died - a dead Man and the law could do no more to Him; it was dead; He was dead; a double death took place when Christ died that wondrous death. What is the effect of this? That all for whom He said "It is finished" are to receive the adoption of sons. Dead people raised into another relationship; not only subjects of the law, as they were, but now in a different relationship they come to eternal life. That we might receive the adoption of sons. Is not this a wonderful doctrine? Is not this the glorious gospel of Christ? In my judgement it is. This is the liberty. Liberty from the law, liberty from its curse, liberty from its claims to work for life, liberty entirely from that which held them in bondage, so that now they are in another state, in another relationship to God; not servants, but sons; not bond-slaves, but sons. Standing in that relationship the Apostle says to them stand fast in it. Stand fast therefore O tempted Galatians; listen not to the Judaising teachers who have come to you without Apostolic authority; listen not to them any longer but just see what Christ has done for you. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free". Remember what He did to make us free; He died. Remember what His death was; it was the death inflicted by the law. Remember who inflicted the curse on Him, even His Father. Remember whose sword it was that pierced Him, the Father's sword. "Awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." This is the liberty, the liberty procured by Jesus Christ.

Let us, in the next place, just look at it a little as helped, experimentally. Good doctrine applied by the Holy Ghost will always beget good experience and the two fit beautifully, walk well together. If you build an experience on wrong doctrine your experience is wrong. The house is no better than its foundation. Experimentally then this is wrought by the Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty". And in that chapter in the Corinthians we have these two covenants that are treated of in this chapter; differently expressed but the same covenants. One is the covenant that was written and engraved in stone; a dispensation, an administration, of death. The other, the ministration of life, and this life comes by the Holy Spirit. It comes when He comes as the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to make the soul free from the law of sin and death, and, just as in the doctrine, when Christ died the law had nothing more to do with those for whom He died, so in the Spirit's grace, when He comes as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, He does really make that soul free from the law of sin and death, yet not in full experience in most cases. It is some time before that is sweetly experienced. What is this blessed liberty? First legal. I need not again speak of that for I have spoken of it doctrinally. But in the next place it is spiritual and in many regards it is known. First it is spiritual in respect of access to God. The law never lets a sinner get near to God. Every time a regenerated soul gets near to God it is through Christ. Even though that soul be under the law, in bondage of feeling, with a guilty conscience, whenever he really prays and gets near to God it is by the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Christ, and I beg those of you who are not in full liberty experimentally to notice this point that when you pray, when you get a good feeling of nearness, "when", to quote Bunyan, "you get a good sense of sin and have liberty to go and confess it" and when you feel that the Lord accepts you in some degree, then that is the very essence and spirit, yea the quintessence of the gospel of Christ. The law forbids sinners as such to approach God. The Gospel calls sinners as such to come near to God. Jesus says to them as sinners "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". This is the spirit of liberty. There is in this sweet access to God a power to plead the gospel. I cannot convey to you what this feeling is - God must give it you - but it is remarkable to those who get it, the power that the holy gospel gives to a sinner as such to plead what Christ is and what Christ did and what Christ is doing. What He is; the Redeemer. What He did was to die voluntarily, lovingly. What He is doing is making intercession in heaven for all who come unto God by Him. This liberty is remarkable to those who get it, when they can open their mouth, when they can enter spiritually into the language of Job - "O that I knew where I might find Him" - and now they have found Him in a measure, and they say, I will order my cause before Him, I will fill my mouth with arguments. What is it to order your cause before God? It is to plead guilty to every charge brought against you. What is it to fill your mouth with arguments? It is to plead what Christ has done and to endeavour by humble faith to put

your case into the hand of the Advocate, Jesus Christ. It is the exercise of faith standing in the power of God. Liberty? O it is wonderful. The King has such an open door and He wont allow a man or a devil nor all the power of hell to close that door. "I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it". The liberty goes home. It becomes liberty in the conscience. "If the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works." That is a remarkable experience when a sinner gets, by the Holy Ghost, such a sprinkling of Christ's precious atonement on his conscience as that he knows, he feels, he enjoys forgiveness of sin. I am not telling you a fable; I am telling you just what is a real experience given by the Spirit of liberty in due time. Some here have had it. I hope never really to give up or forget that first purging of my conscience by the precious blood of Christ. That is liberty from the law, and now liberty from the guilt of conscience that burdened you, depressed you, and frightened you and made God a terror to you. O, a pure conscience is a wonderful thing. Says one, I shall never get that; you speak foolishly if you speak with an exercised heart. Let it be so that you are the greatest sinner living, the sense of guilt that you have done and contracted are not equal to the precious blood of Christ. No, and the Lord keep us from setting up our sins above the power of the atonement. But if we do He wont take any notice of it; He will just sweep it all away when the set time comes. But it is good to be enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus to that extent at such a time of experience that you can say, the precious blood of Christ I believe could, and would if applied to me, cleanse me from all my sins. And now there will come another blessing in this liberty, namely the adoption of a son. "Because ye are sons", in the favour of God, and by redemption, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth His Spirit into your hearts crying Abba Father". That is a rich experience; the Lord give it to us. We do not commonly say "Our Father", but whenever the Spirit of Adoption comes we cannot help saying, "Father". Said God by Jeremiah - If a man put away his wife and she go to another man shall he return unto her? Shall not that land - that allows such a custom - be greatly polluted? Yet thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to

Me. The rain has been withheld; turn again to Me. Wilt not thou say, or rather cry, my Father, the guide of my youth. O, 'tis a heart-breaking, soul-melting experience. Wonderful that a poor sinful creature should have in his heart that Holy Spirit of adoption whereby he cries "Abba Father", and God the kindred owns. You cannot imagine until you get it what this means; the holy nearness, the brokenness of spirit, the sweet tears of happy contrition, the longings to be holy, to live near to God, to walk before Him and with Him, Enoch-like, and the appropriation to yourself by precious faith of the promise of everlasting life. Watts sings well

Thou givest me the lot  
Of those that fear Thy Name  
If endless life be their reward  
I shall possess the same

I remembered the other day about 60 years ago I walked in a street in Liverpool singing in my heart that verse. O it is happy when you feel that blessed Spirit in your soul and you look upon God in that near, that dear relationship and you say my Father.

Now for a few words in conclusion regarding this exhortation. The devil comes and tempts you that you must do something. Stand fast in the "do nothing" gospel. Stand fast in that gospel that says a man's arm, working arm, is broken and man's back is broken; he cannot stand. But Christ comes and gives you power, wings, and feet, and legs and strength to rise up in faith to God. Stand fast. Mind what you hear; take heed how you hear. If the devil tempts you, the Lord enable you to say to Him - Rebuke the enemy and the avenger for me. Do not argue with the devil; he is too clever for any of us. But if we realise that he is tempting us, then may this be our cry - Rebuke Thou the enemy and the avenger. Remember the Archangel durst not bring a railing accusation against him but said, "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan." False teaching may come to you. We are in perilous times; a thing called "charity" that does not live in the 13 chapter of the first book of Corinthians, but is a natural feeling that you must go here and there and do this and that and embrace people. Mind that you do not follow that thing; it will lead you away from God. And make this observation to yourselves, if you can; whatever brings you into

even a momentary disesteem of Christ is wrong. Anything and everything that would set up something in self and bring down, in that measure, the Son of God in your esteem, turn from it as you turn from the devil.

Stand fast by continuing instant in prayer. We need to pray; we are never safe, we are never safer than, when we are kneeling before God. When our hearts kneel down when physically we may not be in a condition to do it. You may be in a crowd and yet your heart may be kneeling before God. You are never safer than then. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe".

Stand fast by the atoning blood of Christ. O, dearly beloved brethren, what gave you the sweet liberty at the first? What healed you? You say, the blood of Christ. Listen to nothing else.

The blood of Christ, a precious blood,  
Cleanseth from all sin, doubt it not  
And reconciles the soul to God,  
From every folly, every fault

"Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free" in regard to affliction. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth". Trouble comes to all men; chastisement comes to sons. The tempter may say when you are chastised, this is God's anger. Yea, he may say, this is God's sword. Stand fast in this - "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth". If you have no chastisement, you are a bastard and not a son. 'Tis great to hold this fast, that God loves men well enough to chastise them.

The Lord help us to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage". If you desire to be under the law, you hear it. If your souls are attached to Christ hold that fast, as God may help you. Now may the Lord give us grace to walk in this exhortation. May the Lord, if it please Him, make this word a blessing to us that we may not follow evil things.

AMEN.