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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel Brighton by
Mr J.K. Popham on Wednesday Evening
4th November 1925

Text Hebrews 10 verse 23

*Let us hold fast our profession of faith without wavering;
(for he is faithful that promised;)*

This exhortation follows the subject we had last Lord's day from verses 19 to 22 of this chapter. Exhortations are very gracious things, they express the mind of God to, and concerning His people. They are not addressed to sinners dead in trespasses and sins, but to living people. Addressed to people who, have had a foundation laid in their souls, of divine truth. Have had revealed in them the grace, and mercy of their covenant God. Addressed to children in the house, to a family whose head, says to them, this is the rule of my house, obey it. Exhortations are therefore very suitable, and I believe very acceptable to every child of God when he is in a gracious state of mind. You would no more, when in a good state, turn away from a precept, than you would from a promise. They are both, the word of God, they are both, acceptable to a living soul. This exhortation has in it, several important points, the first one faith, and secondly the holding of it, and thirdly the manner of holding it. It is followed by a gracious encouragement, for He is faithful that promised, and these things as they may be opened to us by the Spirit, may be, will be, instructive and helpful.

First of all, our faith, which is, the doctrine of faith, the grace of faith, lays hold of that doctrine of faith. The doctrine of faith immediately preceding the text, is the doctrine of the crucifixion, the incarnation of the Son of God. His coming to do the will of God, according to what is written of Him, "in the volume of the book". (Psalm 40 verse 7). His one offering for sin, whereby He perfected for ever them who are sanctified. The covenant of grace made with the church, and made with each individual member of the church. In the teaching of the Spirit and the opening by Him of "a new and living way," (Hebrews 10 verse 20) into the holiest of all, even by the blood of Christ. And by the rent veil of His sacred flesh; and by His High Priesthood. These things, are the doctrine of faith, and are called our faith. What a faith, God is in it. It is the revelation of God. The revelation of God with respect to His heart and purpose. In and for His people. It is the discovery of the love of God, the gift of His Son, and His love to the sinner.

In His free will coming, to take into union with His divine person, a body without sin. It is the precious offering of Himself, without spot to God, thereby putting away sin. It is the birth and the resurrection of Christ. It is His Ascension into heaven, as our great High Priest interceding there, this is our faith. This faith may be held in two different ways, first it may be held in the head, without anything further, and when it is so held, it is a poor holding, and wont last very long. Everyone who has the faith in his head, will lose his faith when he loses his life, if he keeps it as long as that. And the faith thus held makes the holder of it a poor proud, religious creature. He knows nothing about himself, about his sin, his ruin, and nothing about God as a Saviour. He is just a poor formal creature, heady, and high-minded. If there should be such a person here, what a pitiable condition he is in, what a solemn place he is in, for the scripture to go no lower than the mans brain, not to affect his heart, for a man to be a wayside hearer, the word never penetrating, never humbling him, never bringing him to any close dealings with God. O when a high, hard Calvinist comes to the end, he will be no better than the miserable Arminian, whom he could despise, when he was here. May God grant that we may know more than that, and hold the faith differently.

It may be held, it is held, in the second place in the heart, in the conscience, in the understanding, in the affections, in the will. That is the whole of a regenerated person, who receives and holds the faith. It is called by Paul in his Epistle to Timothy 3 verse 9. "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." A pure conscience is a conscience made pure, by the blood of Christ. The mystery of the faith lodged there, held there, is the faith of our text. Holding the mystery is holding the Son of God. Holding that mystery is holding the atonement, and feeling its power in the conscience. It is holding the love of God, having it shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and this faith will save you. If you receive it in the power of the Spirit. The Thessalonians received it so, the Apostle thanked God for them, because he said, they "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (Thessalonians 1 verse 5). That is how you receive it, a sinner is in affliction when he is in condemnation, when the depths of iniquity in him, are broken up. When he apprehends something of the wrath of God, when he feels himself undone, and then the Spirit brings the gospel to him and he receives it in that state, and Christ becomes, his hope, his life, his all. This faith you will find in the Holy Scripture, it is that which is called a door of faith, the door of faith is Christ. "I am the door" (John 10 verse 7). And when you get this blessed door revealed to you, then you enter into the holiest.

This is the blessed faith that comes down from heaven, into the heart of a sinner, by an effectual call. Being called, that sinner becomes justified, and being justified he is ultimately glorified. And so, as has been well said, the two ends of that chain are in heaven, in the throne of God, and it is let down from heaven and gathers up the sinner. "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them he also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Romans 8 verse 30).

This is the faith, and well may we, as God may help us, follow the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates". (2 Corinthians 13 verse 5). Did you ever receive Him, was He ever revealed to you ? "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," (John 1 verse 12). So the faith gathered up, in the various doctrines of it, may be truly said, to be the Lord Jesus, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are. In whom it pleased the Father, that all fullness should dwell, in whom is life, and redemption, and mercy, and peace, and comfort. I need not dwell further on this point, you are instructed well enough, I trust, in the knowledge of the matter, so as not to need, that I should particularly enter on this great subject, the great subject of our faith.

It is very different in the religious world. There is no such thing as our faith there, beyond the naked acknowledgement of the being of God. You will scarcely find anything definite. You may believe anything and be a member of any of their churches. They wont ask you anything, if you make a profession of religion, no matter what religion it is. It may be Unitarianism, and all sorts of things, and you are right, but not so in the church of God. There is a definite faith, such as I have just mentioned to you. O but it is difficult to get to heaven, the doctrine is complete, but the experience is not. The doctrine has no doubt about it, but the experience of the doctrine, and the experience of the way, O what doubt you may have about yourself. The doctrine is glorious, we are sinners, black corruptions and death are in us, and therefore it is not an easy thing. The Apostle says "Let us hold fast," the ground is good. Have you the anchor of hope ? "Let us hold fast," we are to hold. Before you can hold a thing, you must have it. This means, in respect to our subject, you must have the faith, that is the truth, as the truth is in Jesus, revealed to your heart, put into the hand of your faith. Well that is a wonderful thing, any poor sinner who can say that God has given him, to "know that the Son of God is come, and has given him an understanding, that we may

know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5 verse 20).

What a mercy. Have we had that given to us, now to hold it? The difficulties are many, and as I may be enabled, I shall mention some of them. One difficulty is this, the unfulfilled, unrealised desires of the soul. What a difference there is often, between a sinners desires, and his realisation. What a distance there may be between his souls longings, and his realisations of what he longs for. He goes to the throne of grace, led by the Spirit there. He pours out his heart to the Lord, tells Him what a sinner he is, confesses his vile sins, dreadful corruptions, and asks for forgiveness, for the blood of Christ, for the manifestation of mercy, and for the righteousness of Christ to be given to him. And he goes away, he lives through the day, gets into the corner of his room at night, as it were, and takes a review, and says, I have lived another day, and have not had what I prayed for, and this is repeated month after month, and in some cases year after year. Till at last, the soul says 'I am cast down, I do not realise, I have not realised, I fear I never shall realise, what I seek.' And is it not hard to go and pray in the face of that? Is it not difficult, to beg and beg, when there appears to be no willingness, on the part of God, to give that you ask for? Is it not hard to persevere week after week, and month after month, asking, asking and not receiving, not even sometimes, not even a hint given to you, that you will get what you seek, only the distance felt? Truly it is a very discouraging experience, to hold fast to Jesus Christ. To His blood and His righteousness, to believe him, and what He did before the Lord, when there is no comfortable response from God to your heart. You need then, indeed to be enabled to walk in this exhortation. Hold fast, what you have professed. You know of course what the meaning of the word profession is, to say the same things. That is what the word profession means, to say the same things.

You express your confidence with all others, that the blood of Christ can cure, that His righteousness can justify, that His grace can save, that God is good, that He hears the prayers, that He gives good things to the hungry. You have professed these things, with the saints, for years, just as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Psalmist and the Prophets, and the saints of old talked of God, and professed Him. You have also done, and yet with all that profession, when you come to yourself, you say, here I am. I seemed to be started years ago, and I have not taken the step, that I want to take, and that I believe must be taken before I can reach heaven. Now poor discouraged sinner, God help you to hold fast. Help you to believe "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3 v. 8).

How often would the godly Jew in captivity, turn his face to Jerusalem, but O the long seventy years, the long captivity, and you may often turn your face to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and yet, the long time there, has been between the beginning and the springing up of your desire, and the realisation of it. The month Abib, the beginning of the Jewish year, was a beautiful month to them, but the forty years elapsed, before the green springing up of the growth of the promise, in the fulfilment of it, when they entered into the goodly land. And how seldom, as we read their life in the wilderness, how seldom were they steadfast. At looking over fresh difficulty it brought out fresh sin, or fresh murmuring, and we find, fresh discouragement and readiness to give up. When new difficulties come, and there is no realisation of the desire.

A second difficulty is unanswered prayer, unfulfilled promises, words given, words dropped upon your heart, words that take hold of you, and raise up a hope in you, and expectations that have not, as yet, been fulfilled. Why says unbelief, you did not get them from the Lord, and the devil says, you never, never had any encouragement from heaven. Now to hold on, and cleave to the things you believe, did come from God to you. To cleave to a promising God, when He seems to go just the other way, from the promise to the fulfilment, this is difficult. If you have seen the Lord's face, even at a distance, in some gracious gospel word brought to you, you will find it hard to go on trusting, worshipping and following Him, when there is no fulfilment of what you saw and felt, almost sure, at the moment, that He promised it to you. If anyone had told you just at the moment, when you got some good thing, that you would be an idolater very soon, you would have thought, they were greatly mistaken. I believe in God, and I believe He will help me, and fulfil in me what now I seem to have received from Him.

Yes, if anyone had said to Israel on the day when Moses went up into the mount "Now you wont be able to wait very long, you will soon have an idol of your own making," they might have said, "Are we a dog to do this ?". But when Moses did not come down, from the mount for forty days, they said to Aaron 'Make us a god, we do not know what has become of this Moses, make us a god' (Exodus 32 verse 1). Difficult to hold fast ! Our nature is no better than theirs, and when John was cast into prison, John who had a very clear revelation of Christ, and had preached Him. When he was cast into prison he was very soon discouraged, and wondered whether he had had that revelation, or had been deceived. He sent to Christ and said "Art Thou He who should come ? or look we for another ?" (Luke 7 verse 19). You would not have thought that possible, if you had not some experience in your own soul.

What John give all up, or nearly so, I would not do, you might say. You do not know, never condemn anybody in the scripture for unbelief, until you have proved yourself, that you have no such thing in your nature, and that you never will have, while you are in this world. It was discouraging, delays of God are discouraging, unfulfilled words are discouraging. Glimpses of God, not followed with further and clearer views, are real sometimes, in our own way and thought. To banish from us, and it, is difficult, we need this word Hold, "Hold that fast which thou hast," (Revelation 3 verse 11). That is a very striking word in the chapter I read "Let these sayings sink down in your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men," (Luke 9 verse 44) as if He should say – They do not understand at the moment. As if He should say to them, you will need all you have got, all your faith in Me. Faith that is strengthened by what you have recently seen and heard. I have done these miracles, and you have seen them.

I have fed five thousand men on a few loaves and fishes, and you took up twelve baskets of fragments. I have cast out the devil from this child, you have seen it. Let these sayings, these doings, these wonders of mine sink down into your ears, for I the mighty one with you, I shall be delivered into the hands of men, and seem a weak man. And they will shoot out the tongue against Me, they will wag their heads, and will say 'If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him'. And when you see these things, remember what you have seen and heard, and if you have received something from Christ, and heard something in your hearts, when He does not appear, and when providences and temptations seem to say, He cannot help you, and when the devil shall say, there is no help for you, when he shall say there is no God to help you, then hold fast.

The Psalmist got this shaking, and readiness to give up. He said "O my God, my souls is cast down within me." But faith rose in his heart, by the Spirit's power and he said "I will remember Thee from the land of Jordon, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar" (Psalm 42 verse 6). My friends we shall need everything, from the first word to the last, to prop us up from time to time, to encourage us to hope and to say "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him." (Psalm 42 verse 5). What a mercy it is, to have something to go back to, something to remember, when you get old, some of you younger ones, you may not today think so much about it, but when you get old, you may find yourself feeling like this, again and again. O thanks be to God for that testimony, that I had fifty year ago, and for that word that came to me, on such and such occasions.

And for this encouragement, the Lord gave me when I was in great trouble, and for those deliverances He wrought for me, when I thought, there could be no deliverance. You will look back on them, and that will be a holding, sometimes you will go before the Lord with them. Did these things come from heaven to me ? Were they Thy words to me ? You cannot give them up, and perhaps sometimes there will be such a shining upon your spirit, and upon these things, that you will say 'I bless the Lord who has given me counsel', and you hold them fast.

Hold the faith, hold the doctrine, hold the gospel. Hold what God has said unto you, for everything that He says to a sinner, in and by the gospel, is part of the faith, and the whole faith for substance. Like the acorn contains the whole of that oak tree, that in years to come, shall be seen and admired, root and trunk, branch and leaf and fruit. So when God gives you something, there is the gospel in it. "Let us hold fast". Let us hold the faith, cleave to Christ crucified, though the devil mocks. Cleave to His blood, though you feel again and again, wonderingly, you feel, shall I ever know its power ? Cleave to His righteousness, though your rags, shame, discourage and weaken you.

Cleave to His power, though you feel little or nothing of it, as you have heard of it, as you have felt it, stick to it. That is what the Spirit in the word here says "Let us hold fast," faith that God has given to us. His blessed salvation.

And then in the next place, notice the manner of this holding. It is not a matter of indifference. You cannot say, 'Well, I do not say that it matters much, rather you will say

But soul and all's at stake. (Gadsby's 798 verse 3).

Everything is at stake, if I were to lose all that I have in this world, that would not mean that my soul would be lost, but if I had the whole world, and my soul was lost, what would the world profit me ? All is at stake here, so Paul says "Hold it fast" Cleave to it, heaven is in it. Now to hold fast is to esteem it very highly. It is to believe the Son of God is in it. Moses held fast the faith, when he said, 'What will he heathen say, and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name.' Said one, and you may sometimes say it, what if I am lost, what will become of all that I felt, and became of God's name and character. If you hold it fast, again and again, you will mention it before God in prayer. Promises are not altogether lost out of the memory, and what of those in whom they are not quite fulfilled. You know I say the truth, the things you have had are not lost to you. They have not quite gone from you, have they ?

You do not enjoy them as you did, you do not feel the power as you once did, but sometimes you look at them, and O the riches you see in them. How you may say, these things I felt come from heaven into my soul, I would not part with them, though I do not feel them as I would like to, I would not part with them for all the world. And this holding fast has ever so many things in it, it has your will in it, you remember Bunyan's struggle. 'Let Him go if He will', you remember the solemn trouble he came into. Now when a soul has the will in the matter, says Cyrus, who also is willing, "let him go up to Jerusalem," (Ezra 1 verse 3) and you say sometimes, Lord Thou knowest I am willing to be saved by grace, I am not willing to give these things up. And when the man's will is in the matter, and it is so by the Holy Spirit, and he cannot let it go, you are not willingly poor are you ? You are not willingly destitute of the Spirit, you are not willingly empty of the power, you are not willingly empty of all goodness. No, not willingly at a distance, and in captivity, No, "Hold fast" and this is a part of it.

And the understanding is in it too, sometimes it is as if you can say, O, why everything my soul longs for, I can see to be in this word, in the gospel, in the Lord Jesus, in His blood, in His righteousness. The understanding is concerned in this. John says "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true," (1 John 5 verse 20) and that is a mercy, a great mercy. And then the affections are in it, sometimes a distant soul can say:

Jesus I love Thy charming name; (Gadsby's 13 verse 1)

Can you say, O bring me near, grant me a view, give access through the blood of Christ. ? Grant me to come to the Father through Thyself, by Thy Spirit. The affections are here. It is as if now and again your faith hugs the word, hugs the gospel and Jesus Christ, and you go out to Him, as to one who is everything to you, and this is holding fast. The conscience is in it, and conscience is a mighty thing, in a quickened soul, a mighty faculty. Conscience wants to be pure, and there is no purity without the blood of Christ. Conscience longs for acceptance and there is no acceptance apart from the Beloved. Conscience wants to walk uprightly, and there is no walking uprightly without the Holy Ghost. So thus quickened and instructed, or influenced, the faculties of the soul, are thus in the matter of "Holding fast". "Hold fast", if one would rob you of something you value, you will not willingly let it go. And the devil and sin in you seek to rob you, and they do, they will always be at their hellish business. You wont willingly and lightly let go of what God gave to you.

What have you said, you have said I believe in the incarnation of the Son of God, and when men and the devil laugh at it, do you let it go ? And when you have mournfully to say 'I have not seen Him for a long time' are you willing never to see Him again ? No you say, it is a death, a pain to me, not to see Him. Then there is a holding fast in that. And when your conscience is defiled, and it is often defiled, and the enemy and your own unbelief say, you will never be purified, are you willing to remain defiled ? Faith says I want, and I seek the blood of Christ to cleanse me from all my sin. And when unbelief says, there is no such thing as vital religion, it is all a figment, does that leave you easy ? Not if you have got faith, the grace of faith. You say, Lord make me know the reality of things, make this real to me. "Let us hold fast the profession" that we have made, of our faith. We have said it, we believe, none but Jesus, none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.

"Let us hold fast" what we have said. We have said we believe heaven is in Him. Let us hold it fast. We have said, we believe He can help us to the end, and bring us honourably to our graves. Hold fast that profession.

Amen.