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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 1 April 1928

HEBREWS 10 V 23/24/25

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

This very comprehensive and solemn word belongs to every child of God and happy is he who so regards it, who so regards it as to desire grace to walk in it. If we have received faith - and that is an important question - then we are, according to Christ's Word, bound to regard the exhortation, to keep it, to hold it fast. "Hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering". If God had so decreed that He would deal with His people in the Covenant in such a way as to give them eternal life, carry them safely and without exercise, from that moment onward, unto death, then such a word as this might not have been written, but He deals as a father in a family. He speaks as to His children and will have them walk according to the rules of His house. And if they disobey, if they break these rules, then He visits them with the rod. He makes them understand that He is their God and their Father, but He won't let them turn aside without resenting it, and that He will bring them back of His own rich grace and mercy.

I dealt this morning more in generalities with respect to the profession, the word "profession", meaning neither more nor less than "saying the same thing"; that we, who have the life of God in our souls, have said exactly the same thing that was said in Holy Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, in some measure. It is a great thing to profess what God's Word teaches; a very great thing to profess to believe the Bible and all that it reveals, especially the revelation that it makes of the promised Seed of the woman, the first gospel promise; "The Seed of the woman shall bruise thy head" said

God to the serpent, and thou shalt bruise His heel". We hope that, as a church and congregation, this is true of us, that we do believe in the inspired Word of God; that every Word of God is pure, and that, to disregard any part of it, either of doctrine or of experience, or of practice, is to bring down on ourselves, as His children, the rod. Let us hold fast the holy gospel, the profession of our faith. Faith here means, as you might have realised in what I said this morning, the doctrine of faith, not the grace of faith. The grace of faith is created in the hearts of God's people by the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of faith is in the Word of God and that is brought with power to the living faith in the heart. To hold fast the profession of our faith is to believe and stedfastly believe the doctrine of Christ, who is the sum and substance of all the blessed doctrines of divine grace. There are difficulties in the way, one or two of which I named this morning, as unbelief in a proud, corrupted reason; darkness, temptations. One might add - these are difficulties in the way - but I shall find them as I go on and speak of them, one by one.

I would bring before you this; hold fast the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Grace is the whole of the doctrines; every single doctrine of the grace of God is within the bond of the Covenant. It is larger than any one doctrine; it is comprehensive of all the doctrines of God, the doctrine of Christ. It is different from the Covenant of Works, different from the National Covenant made with Israel. Finding fault with the disobedient Israelites, He said, by Jeremiah, that He would make a new Covenant with them, not according to that which He made with their fathers, which Covenant they brake, though I was an husband to them. It shall come to pass after those days I will make a new Covenant. I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their heart. I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people. They shall no more teach every man his neighbour and his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more. That Scripture is quoted by the Apostle Paul in this Epistle. He attributes it to God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. God the Father makes the Covenant; He makes it with the Son; and the Spirit makes it. Even in this chapter, we find it so, where the Holy Ghost, not in this chapter, in an earlier one, where the Holy Ghost is said to be a

witness to us of that Covenant. Because that after that He saith, I will make a new Covenant with them. Hold fast the Covenant made with and by and in the Trinity. This is equivalent to the oath of God: Because He could swear by no greater He sware by Himself", and when the Lord comes to a child of His, born again, and enters into Covenant with him, then that covenant, which I have just quoted the terms of, is made with that person. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts". Each person receives that fulfilment of the Covenant. And it is founded on the forgiveness of sins, according to the terms in this Epistle and in Jeremiah; for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more. Now forgiveness in the soul brings union, communion, peace, happiness and sets before the sinner the bright prospect of eternal happiness and when this has been received, the word is, hold it fast. Hold it fast. Remember that your adversary the devil walking about as a roaring lion, seeks whom he may devour. And the more we know of God, the more envious is that foul spirit and the more determined, as far as possible, to plague that soul. Slight knowledge of God will be very likely a slight temptation, but an intimacy with God in the Covenant will mean the enemy will seek to destroy the Lord Jesus as born in your heart.

How will this Covenant be held? Let us hold fast this profession of our faith without wavering. It is held, first by faith. The grace of faith holds the doctrine of faith. The grace of faith in the heart holds whatever it pleases God to communicate and He communicates this Covenant. You won't lightly give it up. It will be so dear to you that the infinite goodness of God has come and entered into a Covenant with you, that He has taken you, called you, when you were an Assyrian ready to perish, that He was pleased to dig you out of the pit and hew you out of the rock of your father Adam and of the fall in him, as well as out of your own evil ways, and bring you into union with His dear Self in His Son. You won't lightly give this up. And the more the enemy, the more unbelief, and the more a corrupted reason question this, the more you will seek to hold it.

And this will bring another way of holding it before us, namely, prayer. Hold it fast. When you have got a blessing you will find it is not easy to hold it. God will hold it for you and hold you in it,

but as to experience it is not easy. There is so much within us to question it, and so many sins committed by us to make our hold of it, our right to it, questionable, that it is difficult to maintain your hold. But here, God speaks, as if He should say, now I have brought you to Myself, I have brought you into the Covenant, I have brought you to Myself in and by that new and living way which Christ consecrated for you through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, which means His suffering, His death; then hold fast that that I have done. Prayer in you will say, Lord keep it for me. This is the way of keeping it, a good way. Keep it for me. Have you got a good experience today? Then prayer will say, hold it for me Lord, and hold me in it, that I may keep my hold of it. Have you received a revelation of the Lord Jesus in the Covenant and of your interest in Him? Prayer will say, thank God for His goodness, but do keep it for me; keep me in it; keep a good memory of it alive in my soul. Let us hold fast. There is a mocking spirit in man which will enable you, when you are found out, to enter into some of the trials of the Hebrew Christians in the day when this Epistle was written to them. The grand aim of the enemies of the cross, with those who knew the cross, was this, to make them blaspheme the Name of Christ. They might have liberty if they would do that; they could avoid persecution if they would do that. They could have a resurrection out of their trouble if they would only comply with the wish of their persecutors. And apparently there were many defections in those days and as later we shall see, some were already forsaking the assembling of themselves with the persecuted church. So, says the Holy Ghost, hold fast. Let us, I with you, let us all seek to hold fast that which we have received. O dear friends, it is no easy thing to go to heaven. It is no easy thing to hold fast what God has given to you. Let us hold it fast by prayer, the prayer of faith. Hold it fast in love; the religion of Jesus Christ is emphatically a religion of love. No hard doctrine, no hard belief of the truth, but the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost begets love to Him and especially to Him as He is seen in the Lord Jesus. If we love Him that begat the Saviour, be sure of this, we shall love the Saviour who was begotten, as well as all saints who are born again of Him. "If ye love Me" He said. What an Object of love, the Person of Christ. And there are several ways in which this love is manifested. First is this - rejoicing in His presence, cleaving to His Person and His work. When you have Him with

you then He is your soul's delight, your peace, your happiness, and everything that is good and desirable you feel, you perceive, to be in Him. But when He goes, when He withdraws, when your sleepiness provokes Him, when your unkindness to Him provokes Him, when you said to Him, as He knocked at your door and said: Open to Me, My sister, open to Me, you said: I am in bed, I cannot; this unkindness you have manifested to Him, He resents; it is like a piercing in His heart. "Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?" And some of you may well know, memory will take you back perhaps to a time when that haughtiness was upon you and was, as it were, saying: Open to Christ, open to Him? and you preferred something before Him. That business must be attended to, that carnal affair must be finished, and you woke to find that He had gone. You rose to open, not realising His jealousy, and you found He had gone. Now that condition of spirit, that dark and gloomy state, Christ may continue for a time. He may let you see that the grievous sin you committed in thus turning away from Him was such an offence and such a grief to His Spirit that He wont take it away as to the fruit of it for some time. I believe some go with broken bones to their grave for having treated the Lord thus unkindly. Nothing can undo the Covenant, nothing can take away their right to eternal life, as it is in Him, nothing can bring the ruin of their souls about, but their peace is ruined, their stedfastness is ruined, and God shows that He is jealous. I am able, out of a very painful experience, to say this to you, and if there be any here who have not had that sin laid to their charge by the Lord, they never having done it, I would say, ask Him to keep you tender of His love, attentive to any knock that He may make at your heart. Ask Him to make you jealous of your own spirit, for if you commit that sin, if you are guilty of that unkindness to Him, you will understand His Word where He says: "I am jealous for Zion with a great jealousy." Mind this, Christ's love is very tender and the manifestations of it are very tender. Itself can never be ruined; its fruit, for a time, can be spoiled by the people of God. I know some here will enter into that and believe it.

But now, what will He do if He be pleased to withhold comfort? What will He do? Let you sink, let you go further away from Him, let you become indifferent to His absence? No. He will leave that myrrh behind Him, that influence of grace, that reproof of mercy and of love, that will bring you off your bed, bring you away from your false

confidence, your false rest, bring you away from all the notions you have had of safety being of the Lord, and that you need not be troubled. He will bring you away from all these things, and cause you earnestly, constantly, to seek His face. I rose, she said, from my bed. I went into the streets, I went into the city. A virtuous woman in the dark city of the east, O how unseemly, how unlikely, but she braved everything and cried out to all who she met, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" This is one way in which you will find yourselves keeping your profession. You cannot give it up. You knew Him once, were once with Him. He was kind to you, He loved you, He spoke kind words, He spoke very friendly to your heart, and now He won't let you give it up, though He says, I will keep you for a time in the dark.

Let us hold fast. But the enemy says, you get no comfort out of your religion. Ah, but there is a Saviour and a God, to embrace whom is your chief desire. To be right with Him is more than comfort. To know you are in union with Him is more than comfort. And yet, when you are restored, you will have not only the sense of being in union with Him and of being saved, but also the comfort of His love restored to you in a way of experience. Let us hold fast this.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith in the atonement. The atonement. The conscience is here; justice is here; and a great argument for the atonement is the language of your conscience. An enlightened conscience says I can never rest anywhere, in anything but that which gives God, His infinitely glorious character, infinite satisfaction. I know you feel that, some of you, as a true case of your own consciences. Whatever might be set before you as a remedy, if it did not meet the claims of your enlightened conscience, which says I can have nothing, rest on nothing, believe nothing, hope for nothing without the satisfaction of the divine character, then you will look for that satisfaction where alone it is found, namely in the atonement; the atonement of Christ, perfect atonement, absolute atonement, God-satisfying atonement, and therefore the conscience-satisfying atonement. Never think lightly of your conscience; never think lightly of that that conscience claims for satisfaction. The desires of the conscience, as they are wrought by the Spirit, are always in exact accord with the divine character. God is God. O,

I wish we had, each one, a realisation of the character of Jehovah as that character is revealed in Holy Scripture, as that character is just expressed in the law, and as that character is infinitely glorified on the cross by Christ. Now you can rest there when God the Spirit brings that atonement to you, rest there. Now hold that fast. This is a thing, a truth; hold it fast. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith". We believe this; we have expressed our belief in this. I have many times in private, in this pulpit, expressed my belief in the vicarious atonement of Christ. There is no hope for me without it, and the same with you, there is no real hope for you without this, and when you receive this, you receive that that honours God as well as saves your soul, and the honour of God is the first thing; the first thing; the first thing. I have greatly admired, from time to time, that fine word of Watts - it is in our hymn book:

Thou art the ever living God
Were all the nations dead

I would not have that truth expunged from either the Bible or my conscience for the world. The ever living God, His divine character, His inexpressible glory, His ineffable satisfaction in the atonement, and in the conscience when the atonement comes; O how dear that will be to you. Hold it fast. You say, I have lost it. Then hold it fast by prayer that the Lord would bring it back to you, that He would give you a renewed sense of it, that He would again enable you to rest your soul secure on that. The security is wonderful and the sense of that security is beautiful. It is a satisfaction, not an excitement of the mind, but a solid, inexpressible, beautiful satisfaction in your conscience. I do not know how to put it as it deserves to be put, but I know what it is to feel it. There is something in your conscience that says, I need nothing else, I want nothing else, I seek nothing else. The atonement is enough. I say again, one says, I have lost it. Seek it; hold it fast; remember how thou hast received and heard and hold fast. Beg of God to bring it back. He is able; He is able.

And yet, this is mocked at. An Ishmael in your heart mocks at this. I am not surprised at any modernist saying such an atonement is

impossible. I am not at all surprised. If you are given to reflection upon things, you will find something in your nature that will just unite with such a terrible expression. O, but faith says, I am lost without it. You will have to leave reason, that beast reason, as Luther speaks. You will never find a connection between corrupt reason and salvation. This will come to pass, that you will find what Christ said to be solemnly true, that you will have to hate and lose your life in order to find and love it, and down goes this wretched self, and faith rises and holds fast the profession of this blessed atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Why, this is everything. I am disposed to dwell a little on it because of the infinite importance and value of it. It is everything. It is this that Paul speaks of in this chapter. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near" No other way. You will never get near without this. You will never be shut out with this, as you are taught and led to seek it. The atonement is the door, is the cleansing, is the acceptance, is the removal of every disability, every bar, and every reason for rejection that you might have in your mind, or that the devil might present to you. This answers everything; this answers everything. What purity it brings; what sanctification it brings. "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate". What an argument it affords when you plead the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What an encouragement it is to confess sin. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Think of it; the faithfulness of God to forgive the sins of a confessing sinner. That faithfulness, in that particular, rests on the atonement. Faithful; just. Just to forgive a man who is unjust. Just to justify a man who has done nothing but sin; is a piece of sin. Just to forgive him. And the reason is "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin". Does Satan mock? Do you meet with a man who mocks at this? Have you an Ishmael in your heart that mocks at the atonement? Hold fast. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith in love, love to the atonement.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith in hope. Hope is a very beautiful grace, a very powerful grace, an arguing grace, a sustaining grace, a God-honouring grace. Hope - it looks beyond the present; it does not live in present enjoyment. It lives in a prospect. "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for" If you have a liability, and there is in your hand that which will meet that liability, there is no ground of hope that one day you will be able to meet it; you have got it already. Ah, but if a man says, now I am looking for heaven, and sometimes am looking for the presence of the Lord Jesus with me in the way to heaven, then he is expressing hope in the nature of it. Hope is for the future. "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise Him." I am not doing it now, said the Psalmist - "My soul is cast down within me" - but "I shall yet praise Him." He will help me. "David's Lord and Gideon's Friend will help His servant to the end" Hope will say in your heart, "God is faithful who has promised, who also will do it." He will confirm you in the testimony of Jesus Christ. He cannot deny Himself. His character is "God that cannot lie". Therefore, hope in Him.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith with respect to the Holy Ghost. I would ever keep before you this great doctrine, the Person of the Holy Ghost. He is God, a Person, the Third Person, as ordinarily we speak, in the Godhead. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One." And it is said by the Apostle Paul, concerning the Covenant: Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us as He said before, a new Covenant will I make with them. This divine Spirit was promised to His church by the Lord Jesus. On the eve of His departure, so sad to the disciples in their apprehension, He promised this Spirit; He said I will send Him to you; My Father will send Him to you. He shall dwell in you. "He shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." May I repeat what I have often said to you, even though it may seem tedious, this, namely, do not be afraid of ignorance; do not be afraid of confessing your ignorance; because the promise of Christ in the gospel is the promise of the Spirit of whom He said, He shall lead you into all truth; He shall guide you. "He shall glorify Me, for He shall

receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." My dear friends, this good Spirit condescends to teach sinners. He convinces them of sin, a painful thing, but very wholesome, very necessary. He shall convince of judgment, for the prince of this world is judged. He shall show to your faith that Christ has conquered the devil. He shall show to your faith the importance of that Scripture uttered by the Lord Jesus as recorded in St Luke's gospel, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven". He shall convince you of judgment and of righteousness, for the Son of God is glorified, justified in the Spirit, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into heaven. And all this gracious work of the Spirit in a person's heart glorifies Christ, magnifies His Name, makes His truth precious and gives a person, while the divine Spirit is with him, working, a living feeling, a living spring in his soul, that will keep him dissatisfied with everything short of the Lord. A friend may say to one in his mourning, O, but you have had such and such things. Yes, he may say, but they are gone as to their power and sweetness, and though I do not give up having had them, I want them making over again. One may say to him, but your unbelief is very gross; you have had so much from the Lord. He may say, I think I have, but I want more. It is a living thing, a living spring in a living soul. Without that living spring, a living soul may become very dark and distant and dead. But with this living spring of the Spirit then there is kept alive a living exercise. Hold this fast. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith with regard to the Person of the divine Spirit sent by the Father and the Son to sinners.

Now, my brethren, we shall never be godly, either as persons or as a people, in our experience and our walk, without this Holy Spirit. Pray for the Spirit. May we live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit and pray in the Spirit and with the understanding. "Praying in the Holy Ghost".

Well, what I have said about God, though it falls infinitely beneath His worth, dignity and glory, I believe will stand, and you will find it so. I believe, as far as I know, I have just said, though said it very poorly, the thing that is right of God, and, that being so, it will be our mercy if we are enabled to hold fast and seek a more living, gracious, powerful experience of it. O seeker, seek this. O

poor seeker, destitute as you may be feeling, seek this, this blessed God in the communications of His grace, in the touches of His living power, in the influences of His holy truth in the gospel. Seek this. Perhaps you are growing; perhaps you are groaning. Perhaps you are growing downward, taking again and again such dismal views of yourself, feeling such keen convictions of your sinfulness, realising how you deserve eternal perdition, that you can scarcely lift up your head. Well, that will fit you for Jesus Christ wonderfully. Can you listen to this?

Christ is the Friend of sinners
Be that forgotten never

Not sinners who are aiming to get better - He leaves them when they do that - but sinners who at last are brought to have no help, and no hope in self. What is your aim? To be right. Who can make you right? God. Therefore, seek Him. "Seek the Lord and His strength. Seek His face evermore."

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering". Wavering. A waverer is, according to James, a double-minded man. Now you may have many minds about your interest, many doubts about your interest. You may have many fiery darts hurled at you concerning the Object of your faith, but this is a point to notice. Do you find that your soul tremblingly looks to God through the temptations that you have against Him? The needle is never at rest till it gets to its natural point. A living soul is never at rest till it gets some view of God, some sense of His goodness and His mercy. But I know you will be troubled. Every fresh sin will trouble you; every new feeling of guilt will trouble you; every new temptation will distress you, until you may come to say, I do not know anything. Go to God with your ignorance. Hard it will be, but that is the way He has appointed; that is the way. Hold this fast. May the Lord help us. May He graciously shine upon us. Let us hold fast in the midst of temptations to the contrary; in the midst of a natural disposition against it; in the face of all temptations that may come. Hold fast, what we have said, what we have professed before God. As I said this morning, professed chiefly in secret before the divine Majesty; and may He help us. Now I have not got far, nor do I expect to get far,

with this great subject, but what I have said I hope I have said in faith, as believing and loving what I have said to you, and may the Holy Spirit cause your heart to be more and more after this one thing, that great Object of our profession, Christ Jesus.

AMEN.