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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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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 Epistle was written to the Jewish Church, Jewish Christians at Jerusalem and the adjacent places, where there probably would be a few, or perhaps many, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The care of God for His people is conspicuous in the Scriptures. He wont leave them as sheep without a shepherd. He has always manifested His care for them, and in no way more conspicuously than giving the inspired Word of God for their instruction. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine" and we ought - whether we do or not, He knows - but we ought to give very earnest heed to Holy Scripture. The cursory glance at a chapter here and there is not enough. May you, all of you who fear God, greatly value His Word and do not forget that it was given by inspiration of God, a mystery, but a mercy. A mystery that fallible men should have been rendered, for the time being, for the moment of their writing, infallible, to declare infallibly the mind of God. Paul was inspired to write this Epistle, and in order to an understanding of the force, the point and edge of the exhortation of the text, it is needful to have some general view of the intention of God in the Epistle, the doctrinal part of it, for doctrine is the foundation for both experience and practice. The whole of the Epistle is very beautiful. Perhaps some of you may be able to sympathise with one's own feeling that if one were to choose one Scripture before another to have read to one on a dying bed, it would be this, in which so illustriously Christ is exalted. If you go to the first chapter, you will find the first step with respect to the

important teaching of this Epistle is the exaltation of the Person of the Son of God above all other creatures. Angels - these are called upon to worship Him, the Son. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son....."Never forget that O believer, never forget the Person on whom your faith is founded, the Person of the Son of God. And this will give a key, as it were, to the understanding of the exaltation of Christ's Priesthood above the priesthood of all the priests of the Levitical dispensation. " this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood" The Person first; be particular here. See if you know, if you have any inkling in your hearts concerning the Person of the Son of God who is so wondrously, illustriously, set out in that first chapter. "Hath spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" Think of it; what a wicked person is the man who looks on creation wherein he may read, if he be not wilfully blind, the evidences of the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator, and the Creator is the Son by whom the Father made the worlds. And, having established the superiority of the divine Son above all creatures, then by the Spirit we are told in the next chapter that this Son condescended to take on Him the nature of the children whom He was to bring to glory. The children being made partakers of flesh and blood, He also likewise took part of the same; our nature without its sin, united to the Person of the eternal Son of God. No saint can ever be, in his own person, so exalted as his nature is exalted in union with the Person of the Son of God, but the exaltation of the church, of each person, each member of the church, rests here and has its exaltation from the union of the nature of the church with the Person of the Son of God. And following that, you come immediately, in the third chapter, to the Priesthood of Christ and, says the Apostle. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." And when you have duly considered Him, then you, by the Spirit's grace, will be in a position to consider His Priestly offering, for a Priest means a middle person, a mediator who has to do with two parties between whom is difference. And the parties in question are the holy eternal God and sinful men, and in order to bring these two together there must be a sacrifice, and that sacrifice must be just the offering of beasts and the sprinkling of

their blood. These were types, of the offering of Himself by the High Priest, Jesus Christ, without spot to God. And throughout, from that chapter, you come along through the Epistle with the one theme set out beautifully, clearly, the Priesthood and Priestly sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. And coming to this chapter, the Apostle beautifully speaks to poor people who realising the greatness, majesty and holiness of God, tremble at the thought of approaching Him, realising their unfitness to do so. He says to these people "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". Here is the ground, the reason of the exhortation. Draw near to God; remain not away from Him. Let not the sin of which you are conscious, the guilt that keeps you low, the infirmities that stumble you, the daily failings and fallings that often surprise you, let not these things, singly or all together, keep you from this great God. All your happiness is in Him. All the good you can ever have, you must receive from Him. The heaven you hope for, you must receive this way. Therefore, remain not away from Him. See the new way to Him; see the reason of the exhortation; a High Priest over the house of God, a great High Priest, whose one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and on this ground, come to Him. "Let us draw near". Do you find a power in your hearts at times enabling you to do this - draw near to God? One of the grandest experiences you can have is some realisation of the Being of God. Religion without some realisation of the Being of God is a flabby thing, and not hopeful, for how can any person properly reverence God, of whom he has no knowledge, and how can salvation appear a great thing if ruin is not known? And how can ruin be known, if God be not known? You can only know sin by knowing God in His law. Sin is the transgression of the law. Well then, let us draw near. Tremble not to the keeping of your soul away. Draw near to Him. By prayer and supplication let your requests, however many they be and of whatever sort, be made known unto God. Seek first His kingdom. These Scriptures all derive their beauty and their reason from the atonement made by our great High Priest. Never forget the source of good. If you do you will forget to be thankful for whatever may come to you. Remember the source. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith". Not, perhaps, an assurance of your

interest but a full assurance of the sufficiency of this ground, this reason, this new and living way. See if you are assured of that. That will give you boldness, that will help you in confession of sin, that will help you to cleave close to Christ. A full assurance, an understanding in this great matter, that there is a sufficient ground and reason for a sinner as such to approach God. "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" is a step further in experience, a realisation, not only of the sufficiency of the atonement, but of its power on your heart. "And our bodies washed with pure water"; the clean water of which Ezekiel speaks - God, in him - "And I will sprinkle you with clean water". Your whole persons, notwithstanding the sin that is in you, shall be acceptable to God in this complete atonement made known by the sprinkling, the teaching and the grace of the Holy Spirit. And thus we reach the text. I am fond of a foundation work, for I need such myself. Always be careful of the ground on which you build. If you talk of hope in God, look to the ground of it. If you speak of getting near to Him, mind how you do it. Be careful of the way to Him. You will never be the worse for close examination of this matter. Look well to this. Let us hold fast on this ground and for this reason as well as for the hope that we have of reaching heaven. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering". The meaning of the word "profession" is this, saying the same thing. As if Paul should say, now you Christian Hebrews, remember this, the saying of Peter, his noble profession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" and you have said the same for substance. Hold it fast. It is possible that among the people to whom this Epistle was written, Christian Hebrews, were some who would remember the Day of Pentecost. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of Christ showing Himself alive after His passion to above 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part then had been taken away, but some remained and when this Epistle was written there might have been some who remembered, being present, Peter's great sermon and in it that declaration that Christ could not be holden of the pains of death. They were loosed, loosed by Justice; justice satisfied. Loosed by omnipotence, loosed by love, loosed because God, having promised Christ and shown Him the path of life and the river of pleasures at His right hand, now would have His beloved Son incarnate there. This is the profession, that we see what the Scriptures say. It is to see the gospel, hold fast the gospel, the

everlasting gospel, the grace of God. Hold fast that which the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich". It is a great thing to hold, it is a great thing to keep this; this everlasting gospel. One thing is sure, that if we hold fast the profession of our faith we shall be up against modernism. If we hold fast this that God has revealed in infallible Scripture, His everlasting love and the greatest gift possible to Him in that love, even His only begotten Son and the coming of that only begotten Son into this world, being made Man by the virgin birth. If we hold fast the vicarious atonement of this Man, Jesus Christ; if we hold fast His precious burial, spoken of in Scripture as part of the revelation given to the Apostle Paul, related in the Corinthians; if we hold fast His resurrection and the infallible signs by which He made known that He was the same Man who was crucified on Calvary who then was speaking first to Mary, to Peter, to two disciples as they went to Emmaus; if we hold fast that, leading out His disciples as far as Bethany, He blessed them and was received up into heaven in their sight; if we hold fast that He is in heaven, interceding for His people, caring for them and sending to them the promise of His Father, we shall find we are holding that which is of infinite value, but we are holding that which both our nature and the devil will seek to wrench out of our hands. How is it to be held? The exhortation, so to speak, tells us of difficulties. It says, you wont find it easy. You Hebrew Christians will come under the influence of Judaising teachers. They will tell you that the gospel is alright but you must join to it the law. Hold fast this, that the Person of Christ was the realisation of God's ancient promise and hold fast this that in His death He fulfilled and realised every type and every promise concerning Him, given by Moses and the prophets. There are difficulties in the way of holding this and I will try to mention several of them to you. One is what Luther calls, that beast reason. He says that beast reason must be killed; human reason, fallen. It is fallen because it is part of man and man is fallen; has an astigmatism. It sees things upside down; it says they are not; and this will be always asserting itself. And if you are given to reflection as you read the Scriptures, if you are given to reflection on God's dealings with you; if you are given to reflection on the contradictions that come into your mind and the contradictions

of science, falsely so called, you will find it difficult to hold fast what you have said. Many a time you may have said, in the language of Deuteronomy: "An Assyrian ready to perish was I". I came before God as such, a lost person and He looked on me, He had pity on me, He blessed my soul, He assured me of the atonement and sprinkled the blood of Christ on my conscience and made me happy in the Lord, but now, instead of that peace I enjoyed I have trouble, I have corruption, I have many reasonings, I have much distance from God, I have many times defiled my feet, and I do not get them washed, and therefore I question the washing of regeneration which made me clean, and many and many a temptation I have against myself and these things. I say such an experience, such reasoning will make it not easy, but very difficult to hold fast what you said to the Lord, and what we say to Him in prayer and confession and profession is vastly more important than what we say to men. And for this reason I bring this first of all to you, what you say, what you profess to God. You have said perhaps to Him many a time, my hope is built on the Person, Priesthood and Priestly sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. You could not make a much more solemn profession than that, but spiritual pride may come in, indolence may come, idleness of hands, as Ezekiel speaks, and fulness of bread, may come. And why should I be always exercised, why should I always be more or less tossed about if I have not the sensible presence of God? I have had and therefore why should I question matters? let me hold fast. And such an experience may land a person in darkness and confusion for many a day, many a year. Hold fast. When you make a profession of your hope before the Lord, you profess that which was the immediate result of the teaching and grace of the Holy Spirit in your heart. When you get away from that teaching, from that grace, you may sink into a slothful state. You may slumber and sleep. You may build on that which was right a good deal that is wrong. You may build on a good foundation, wood, hay and stubble and make a great deal of work for God in burning it all up and a good deal of trouble for your own soul in experiencing the burning. Hold fast. And perhaps you profess before God this; you entreated Him, out of a conviction, out of a need of it, that you could only make progress in the way to heaven by the gracious teaching, presence, and abiding in you, of the Holy Ghost. A very true word and truly said when it was said by you, but you may have forgotten it, and you may have said, I am not going to give up anything; I am not going

to give up what God has said to me; and quite right, if it is right. If you say it rightly, it is good that you should hold fast. But you may say it carnally; you may in some way and manner be turning the grace of God, given to you, into lasciviousness and for the time He lets you pass on, but the day is coming when He will deal with you for it. Hold fast what you said with respect to life, liveliness, and with respect to the indwelling and grace of the Holy Spirit.

"Let us hold fast". It is not easy. A constant exercise must be wherever a healthy condition of soul is, and this life of the soul comes from heaven. "No man can keep alive his own soul".

Hold fast to the Lord Jesus, His great, His glorious Person. I wish, much I wish in these my last days for myself, that the Person of Christ may be made known to me in a manner, a measure, hitherto unknown and I wish the same for you. There is a glory in His Person, a glory therefore in a sinner's soul when Christ is there. The glory of the Father's love: "God so loved the world". The glory of divine secrets made known: "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him". He will never come to you and be silent about some divine matters. You may depend upon it, if Christ comes to you, dwells with you, that He will be telling you some things concerning the eternal purposes of God. He hath declared His Father. You may well examine this point. Hold fast the profession of your faith that Christ and Christ alone can do you good; that Christ and Christ alone can bring you near to God; that He and He alone can make you one with Himself. Let us hold fast this great matter in our souls. My brethren how do you stand with regard to this inward holding? Militant Protestantism is very good as far as it goes - never say a word against it - but limit it. It is good so far as it goes. It protests against the blasphemous, deceitful, mass. It protests against popery as a whole and popery in its particulars. It protests against a foreign sovereign, so called, having any authority in this, our realm. Hold that fast, but do not stop there, that is to say, may the Lord grant we may not stop there. "Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life" which means fight your way to the throne of grace when the devil, when heresies in your nature and teaching about you may put up blocks and hindrances in the way. There are two great principles

which, I am disposed to think and say, may perhaps before long be great tests, tests to which the Church of God, the professing church will be put. And the first is this, the inspiration of the Scriptures. The denial of that inspiration is painfully common and if we are enabled to hold fast what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, it will be well for us and with us. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Stick to this Book my friends, keep close the inspiration. If this Book is not infallibly inspired, how am I to know anything about God and believe with certainty? How can I reasonably even build a hope for an unseen eternity on a Book which, in its testimonies, is not to be depended on? If an ignorant Jew wrote, how can I, who may be quite as well able to enter into things as that Jew, how can I depend on what he said? But if God, the Holy Ghost, laid hold of certain men - Moses, downward - and used each one as a penman to describe and utter, not only the thoughts of God but the very words God would have those thoughts expressed in, then I have got that which is certain. Hold fast this, my beloved friends. Young people, I speak to you, hold this fast. School days are trying days today for children and for those of us who are older. If we at all are given to the literature of the day, religious and other, we shall find a good many things come up against our faith in the Scriptures as being given by inspiration of God.

But now, with regard to this point, there is one other word I would say. The greatest, the most satisfactory proof you can have, of the inspiration of God's Word is having it in some part of it come to your own soul and faith by the Holy Ghost; a Scripture that will cast down your imaginations and all the things in you which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God; a Scripture that will cast out despairing thoughts because of your sinfulness; a Scripture that will tell you of the atonement that is sufficient for every sin, but the one which is never to be forgiven; a Scripture that will show you the free love of God without the consideration of a man ever doing good or evil; a Scripture that will write on your heart the love of God for you and put on your conscience the virtue of the blood of Christ. That, that will be to you the best evidence that you can possibly obtain and enjoy of the inspiration of the Word of God. I

know there are many arguments that are used in favour of inspiration, and I value them, but this is the one of all others that I would value.

And the second thing that is probably yet to be a test to the Church of the living God is the Person of Christ, the eternal deity and Sonship of Christ and the virgin birth of the Man united to the Son of God. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Many conjectures were then indulged and there are still many. "But whom do ye say that I am?" "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Ah it is great to know that. Do you profess it? Do you profess Him? Have you witnessed a good confession before any witnesses that Jesus is the Son of God? Can you say that He came in the flesh? Do you believe Paul's testimony in the Galatians: "When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". This then is what we are to hold fast. Here is our anchorage. Here may the anchor of hope find a ground and here may we be steadfast in the faith. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith". Mind if your tongue is in agreement with all this Book; if you profess that which is in perfect agreement with it. I do not say if you know as much as the Scripture reveals - we know very little - but if, though we be ignorant of many, many things, we can say as far as we know that we believe the whole of the Bible to be the very Word of the living God, and the promises and the types and shadows of the Lord Jesus under the Levitical dispensation are all realised in the Man Christ Jesus, the God Man, then happy are we. And if on our face for His dear Name, shame and reproaches be, help us, the Lord help us, to say, all hail reproach and welcome shame. We are not to be without it if we live long. But still, grace, grace will be enough in us to say: All hail reproach and welcome shame, considering Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds. Now this one point I leave with you. Consider it my friends as embodied in the first word of the text: "Let us hold fast", keep our hold, maintain our hold by the power of the Holy Ghost, our profession.

AMEN.