

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 7th June 1918

Text: Hebrews 11. v. 30

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,
after they were compassed about seven days."

God has been pleased to put high honour upon the faith which He gives. It is His own creation. It is the fruit of His powerful working. It is a remarkable expression that is used concerning faith, by the Apostle Paul, where he declares that it is the very same power that God used when He raised up Jesus from the dead, by which He causes faith to exist in the hearts of His children - "according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." It is necessary if there should be faith in any sinner's heart, that this divine power should be exerted to create it, for this reason, that we are born in trespasses and sins. We are dead in them. And also for this reason, that faith is not of the law and that therefore it belongs to another kingdom entirely, and a different one. The law is not of faith. Works belong to the law, and the man that does what he is commanded to do shall live in and by his obedience. But faith, the faith of God's elect, is called also the faith of His operation and that is to set forth that man has no hand in it; that it is absolutely a new and mighty work, never at all contemplated in creation. Written in the law, but absolutely God's great and gracious and miraculous work in the heart of one whom He will save, and thus may we be enabled to receive it. This expresses and explains the difference between natural and spiritual religion. You may have the most acute knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, and have no faith. You may be a zealous worker, and have no faith, but if you have faith, it will bring you to God; it will exercise your soul; it will make you perceive that the only hope for you, is to be found in Christ; the only plea that you can ever use pre-vaillingly with God, is that which faith uses when she mentions the righteousness of Christ; and the only ground on which a sinner can stand, is that of free grace apprehended by faith: and the only way by which a sinner can come near to God, is by faith in the Person and work of Him who said, "I am the way." Well may we then, if at all concerned about salvation, cry to God to give us faith, and as He creates it, so it must stand in His creating power. The Apostle Paul would not attempt to beget faith in any person by enticing words of man's wisdom, but well knew how insecure would such a faith be whenever it might be assailed. Writing to the Corinthians he said that he came not unto them "with enticing words of man's wisdom." He preached simply to them and for this end, that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God", and depend upon it my friends, this is a solemn truth, that if your faith stands in the wisdom, the argument of any man, it will fail you when you most need it. If you have gathered anything, on which you think you can build, or have seen in arguments which may have been convincing to you; if you think you have seen the doctrines of God's word clearly,

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and that you believe them and that be your only evidence of God and His word, I repeat it, when you most need your faith it will fail you. Bunyan's, or rather, the advice of the man who was his pastor, whom he called holy Mr. Gifford, was good advice. Said he - "Beg of God to set you well down in every truth, for if you take anything on trust, be assured of this, that it will fail you in an hour of temptation." O beloved friends, it is a great thing to be a believer, greater than most men suppose, to believe in God, to believe, because you believe in God, in your own ruin and then to believe in Christ because He is manifested in some measure of light and life to you. The Lord Jesus said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Not because he grows strong in himself, but because he hangs on Him who is almighty and therefore 'tis as one has well expressed it - "Faith laughs at impossibilities and cries it shall be done." Faith looks to God. If you live on anything short of God, you die. If a man lives on the applause of men, when that ceases, his life ceases. If you live on naked knowledge, when that becomes dim, your life will fail you. - "Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Faith has to do with God. In the first place always, faith has to do with God and after that with men and things.

First God. If He be not apprehended, then there is nothing right. If He be apprehended by faith, all things are right to the person who so apprehends God and I beg your attention to this as a principle, look well to it. See in whom you believe. What you believe. Take heed to this, for if you are mistaken as to the one in whom you believe, you can be right nowhere really. "I will," says God, "give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord", and He bids His people rejoice in Him, in this, that they know Him to be that God that exercises righteousness and lovingkindness and mercy in the earth, for therein He delights. This faith, having to do with God, next has to do with men and things. It has to do with yourselves. The greatest stumblingblock a child of God ever has in this world is himself. The greatest burden he ever has to bear is himself. He can say, he does say sometimes quite honestly, 'O that I had not a myself - self in myself I hate, 'tis matter of my moan.' This is the work of faith to make you believe you are ruined. Just the testimony of God in the Scriptures about men. Faith believes respecting yourself. You are the person. "Thou art the man." You are the sinner. You are the enemy. You are the blindness and the darkness. Faith has to do with this, and faith has to do with things; with circumstances such as God creates. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Shall men rise up against you and the Lord have nothing to do with that? Shall there be any trouble come into your family and the Lord have nothing to do with it? Faith's business is to exalt the Lord in circumstances. It was beautiful in Job. He saw not the Chaldeans nor the Sabeans. He did not see the strength of the wind. He saw nothing in all his troubles, his losses, but the hand of God. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And further, faith has to do with eternity. Future things, faith espies. Future things respecting this life and respecting the life to come. Respecting this life, faith in

David's heart, working, moved him to say - "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," for God had spoken well concerning him and his faith received it. When trouble came to Jacob, faith had to do with God. It went backward and it looked forward. It went backward and said to the Lord - "Thou saidst." It went forward and there was trouble and said - "what shall I do?" It has to do with things future and sometimes it has to do with eternal things. Both these things the Apostle Paul expresses in one Scripture where he says - "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Faith in the text has all through this remarkable chapter, days of exploit. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and shall do exploits", and this is one of them.

There was Joshua. He had his people to lead into the goodly land, the land of promise. He had followed the Lord, and the people followed him across Jordan as by dry land. The hand of God cut off the waters that were above, from the waters that were below and the land was dry. The feet of the priests stepped into that Jordan and there they stood, bearing the ark until all the people had passed over. You will never get through any Jordan without the Ark - Christ, and the feet of your High Priest causing all waters of trouble to dry up and you then pass over them as by dry land. And now the people were on that side of Jordan. They had entered the goodly land and that day the manna ceased to fall, because they ate of the old corn, the corn of the land into which they had entered, but as soon as they are in the land, a difficulty meets them. They pass Jordan right over against Jericho. Jericho was a city and the walls were high and the gates were shut, for the fear of Israel had fallen on the people, and this was to be their first step, - to meet a difficulty, and faith was that grace which was wrought in the heart of Joshua the priest and the people. They were to meet that difficulty in a supernatural way. They were not to invade the city and by slings and stones and battering-rams make a breach in the walls, that would have been natural, but the people had not been used to war and God would not have them fight at once in that way, but they were to believe in Him. To do His bidding with regard to this difficulty; to go just the way He told them; to do what would appear absurd to nature. The direction of God would make no appeal whatever to their nature. What, walk round the city day by day and do nothing - not even speak to my neighbour! No sound to come out of our mouth; no hand to touch the enemy; no weapon to make, or attempt to make a breach in the wall anywhere, but just to go following the priest and the seven men who had trumpets of rams' horns, and they proceeding, blowing the trumpets and the people after the ark, following, day by day. Do you think you can manage your trouble like that? Happy the man who can do it! Let them alone in all ways but by prayer, unless God gives you some direction to go otherwise. O blessed sinner who can believe, in trouble, who can believe, who does believe, that there is nothing too hard for the Lord; that he need not to fight in this battle, but go as the Lord

has said. - You find in another case later in the history of the people of God, that they were surrounded by a mighty foe. The word of God to Hezekiah was this:- "Answer him not a word. He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, By the way that he came, by the same shall he return." - On the seventh day the people were to walk round the city seven times. It all looked so strange to nature. So imprudent to waste the time, nature would say, doing that, but now, on the seventh day when they had compassed it the seventh time; when they had done that which was completely against nature: God's moment had come and Joshua then had the trumpets of rams' horns blown seven times and he said then to the people - "Shout!" and they shouted and the walls fell down flat, that no flesh should glory in God's presence over that great thing. No hands touched these walls but they fell down flat. The Jews have a tradition that the earth opened and the walls sank, that they were not seen, they simply went down. Whether that be so or not is not important to us. The important thing is this, that they fell down flat and then the people went up, everyone, straight before him. "By faith," says the Apostle Paul, "the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

And this may be useful to us. It is a history, but it is a mystery also and it may be useful to us as God shall be pleased to open it, for we have cities. We have difficulties. We have walls to confront us. We have apparent impossibilities and God has ordained that we shall not touch them. "There was no sword in the hand of David," one writes of him, going to meet the giant, and we may say - no sword must be in our hand except one sword - the sword of the Spirit. I do not like to be fanciful but I think I speak the sober truth when I say that every child of God has a wall often, before him and that is the obdurate hardness of his heart, and this he is not to attempt to throw down with his own hand. He has no power. He is not skilled in this matter of working with his own hand, nor has God set him to do it, but faith does it this way. She takes the sinner to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and I do not doubt that I express the experience of some here, when I say that again and again that wall has fallen down before the cry of faith; that a sweet sacred softness has come; that the melting mercy of God has flowed in so that the hardness, that obdurate hardness that nothing could move, no trouble, no reading of Christ's sufferings, no mental exercise upon His death, no judgement of God in providence, nor all of them together could move that dreadful hardness of heart; like an adamant it was felt to be, and yet faith in the heart, working, has gone to the Lord - 'O melt this heart, take this hardness away from me. Leave me not to be as a stone before Thee, under Thy dealings with me,' - and faith has got the victory. Mercy, as I have said, has come, melted, humbled, and brought you before the Lord as a little child. Is there not a wall sometimes of the most dreadful, inveterate unbelief? Who can move it? Reasoning cannot. You cannot undermine it by reasoning. You cannot make a breach in it by reasoning. The past mercies of God do not, as alone viewed. Yea, it will even say to you that those things happened by chance and there was nothing divine, or special in them. This will stand up - inveterate unbelief, that dares to contradict the Almighty; that says - 'There is no

help for you in God;' but what has been the course God has caused some of us to take with this sin, this difficulty? Have we not gone to Him and entreated, that faith might be strengthened if we had it, and that if we had it not, He would give it us; that faith in Him might prevail; that we might call on His great name, believe in the Person, blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and hang upon the cross. That cry has done more than all the reasoning. It has brought the blessing and answer down from heaven and faith has been strengthened.

One way that God has strengthened faith, sometimes, in us has been to give a view of Jesus Christ, a moving, melting view of Him. One way has been to bring the atonement in, in its unctuous power, and we have found it was one thing to view the atonement intellectually or mentally, one thing to use luscious words about it, - another thing to believably feel it. One thing to see it as a picture, another thing to have it as a life. O when it was made the latter, then, then the wall, the dreadful high black thick wall of unbelief fell down flat and we could believe all things, and all things became possible to us. We could believe that no death, no river of death, no trouble, no fire, no sword, no judgement, no temptation, no indwelling sin should ever ruin us. They would trouble us, they would try us, they would put us to sore tests, but none would hurt us. "What harm can ever reach my soul beneath my Father's eye?" people have said, by precious faith. By faith this wall has fallen down, and those who have lived longest, have seen most of this great matter. What energy has faith sometimes put into the soul, making that remarkable word of Christ's true - "If ye have faith, and doubt not, if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."

Faith made three men brave the furnace that Nebuchadnezzar had had lighted, and brought the Son of God down to them in that furnace and made it a pleasant place to them. Nothing is impossible to faith. It brings the sweetest liberty to the sinner. It brings him into the nearest, the most intimate connection with the Almighty, in Jesus Christ. It brings him to believe that his soul, so worthless, so sinful, so over and over again, as it were, drenched in sin, shall be holy and without spot or blame or wrinkle or any such thing, in the sight of God, and faith brings a distant truth near and unbelief then has no voice, no valour in the soul. Sometimes it has a preponderating voice for that and says you are wrong, but unbelief is put out and faith triumphs. 'I shall be near and like my God,' says a sinner in the triumphant language of faith. 'I shall get through this; unbelief, though it plague, it shall not destroy me. I shall win the victory.'

Faith sometimes brings God very near to a sinner. "While we look," says Paul, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Ah! when faith looks at Jesus Christ in the glass of the gospel; at the fountain of His precious blood; at His justifying righteousness; she triumphs over sin and death and hell. And in this connection, I may say, faith works two ways. She goes backwards and she says Jacob-like to the Lord - "Thou saidst." Like David - "Thou hast revealed to Thy servant saying, I will build thee an house." Like Paul,

the Lord promised that he should get to land with all the men who were with him on the ship - "I believe God," said Paul. Does your faith sometimes act like that? Do not you go back to certain times and places and circumstances; troubles, troubles like a sea overwhelming you, troubles raging and roaring; mountains moving; earth shifting; all created things being removed as it were, and you have no standing in your heart, nothing at all in this world, and then God has just brought you to Himself and you have said - 'I stand here. I stand upon His merit. I have nothing else to live on. No smiling circumstances, no prosperity here. Nothing solid. All things dissolving. Many of them dissolved. Now, I stand upon His merit.' What an amazing mercy! - and as faith thus works backwards, so it will work forward and look into the Trinity and sometimes it pleases the Holy Ghost to give faith a wonderful sight. The Church had it. She saw her Sun and her Shield. Her faith saw the Lord Jesus in these two great characters and she said to God, in faith, seeing them, "Behold, O God our Shield." - "God is a Sun and Shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." A Sun to shine, to shine upon the road you have to walk, so difficult to nature, so hard to nature. The Sun shines upon it and instantly, as it were, you have on your feet shoes of iron and brass. A Shield to cover you, to defend you. What harm can reach you? Says the Apostle Peter, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" and surely the man who follows after God, is a follower of that which is good. That wall falls down!

Faith has to do with circumstances. Without faith you will soon, likely enough be overcome. A sort of sullenness or despair or rebellion, or fretfulness; a sinking in true dejection and weakness will come to you. O beware of dealing with your own circumstances by reason. Well, but how am I to deal with them? Well I can tell you how, if you have faith. If you have no faith, I can only say, poor creature - God give you faith, but if you have faith, I can tell you how you will get on. You will struggle after God. You will have many fears, think often perhaps, that He is against you; that this, is a mark against you and that, is an evidence that God has a controversy with you; and you will be falling down before Him - 'Lord, if there is anything wrong in me, if Thou art dealing with me for any sin which I know not, if Thou art dealing with me and correcting me for some error of which I am not conscious, do mercifully show it to me.' Then faith will go to God and the circumstances will be under the Lord. Solomon says, "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good," and a good, wise way to handle a matter is by faith. This will cause you to keep your heart with all diligence, for you will believe that out of it, in this and that trouble, are the issues of life.

Now we have some striking instances in the Scriptures of how faith managed in trouble. Very, very striking instances, as when you find David in trouble. He says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," and away he goes to his God. "That will I seek after." 'Lord, tell thy servant I beseech Thee - do this Lord.' "Turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." That was the way he managed. His faith went to his God. He was King in Israel but now, driven away by the unnatural rebellion of his wicked son Absalom, and of Ahithophel, whose counsel in those days was as the oracles of God, both with

David and all the people, had advised a good move. O, but David's prayer was more powerful than Ahithophel's counsel. You think of it. That is how David got on. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." Desired, to get through well and honourably. The faith of David caused him to fear God and made him strong in that particular. When David's enemy was put within David's reach, and David's servant advised that Saul's head should be cut off, what did faith make the good man say? 'O touch him not: he is the Lord's anointed - now God being on my side, if He will bring me to the Kingdom, either Saul shall fall in another way or he will die a natural death.' God will work. His faith took him to his God; made him careful and cautious; made him tread very tenderly here. 'God forbid I should put my own hand to this business. I will wait on the Lord. I will seek His counsel and His working and His deliverance and wait His time.' If you have faith, that will be the course you will take in your troubles. You will be sure to go that way; God has ordained it. Jacob might have, as we could perhaps judge, had opportunities to have gone back long before he did, to his father's house and left his oppressor, Laban, who ten times had changed his wages, but he waited on God; his faith was rewarded. Said the Lord, at the right time to his servant Jacob, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee," and when Jacob had this trouble, meeting this promise on his way back, then his faith took him to God. "Deliver me," he said. Running back was no remedy. Meeting his brother with a bold face would have been no remedy. This was the course - 'Lord, Thou didst say - go back - and I am going back and now my brother whom I injured so long ago is coming to meet me and with no friendly intention apparently, for he has four hundred men with him, who have not come without arms. What shall I do?' And very soon Jacob said to his brother, Esau, "I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God." His faith turned Esau round, took every frown from his face, put every sword up into its sheath and brought a kiss and a smile. O that God would help us in our troubles to do likewise. By faith Esau fell down flat.

By faith God has helped some of us to go to Him in trouble, in difficulties and He may have said to us - "I will be with thee." - "I will help thee." Better to be in fear and dread of yourself and fearing the Almighty with a filial fear and seeking unto Him by faith, than to have all the world at your command and no God to bless you. Unsanctified good, is an evil where there is no faith. Sanctified trouble, is a blessing where there is faith, and you will get that sanctified trouble if you have faith. By faith you will deal with circumstances. You may have to deal with men who are unfriendly; with rivals to your business. You may have to deal with men who would persecute you, and nature would say - skin for skin, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, life for life. Says faith, 'that is not the way, the gospel way is this' - "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." The gospel is - "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." Leave things with Me. Leave men with Me. Leave your troubles with Me. I will manage for you. Faith does it, and some of us know what that means. Enemies shall set on thee to hurt thee. God hides people in the secret of His presence, from the pride of man. He shuts them up as in a

pavilion, and the strife of tongues and the evil that persecutors would do, sometimes He has forbidden altogether and then when He has allowed persecution to prevail, faith has overcome the persecutor, even when the persecutor has lighted the fire and put the poor persecuted one into it, faith has got the victory, then things have fallen down flat. O bless God for faith. David said, "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel," and you who have faith may well say the same. 'I bless the Lord who has given me counsel to go to the throne of grace with my troubles and with my enemies, if I have had any, or have not, I bless the Lord He has given me counsel to cast my burden on Him,' as He says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." - "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

One word, and I close. Seven days! Why not the first day? God would try their faith. Why not the second day? God would try their faith. "The Lord trieth the righteous." Is He unkind? No. Is He unwise? No, but He will glorify Himself. How? By a waiting faith. By a faith that, although He seems to delay, says He will come. Although the promised good does not appear, it will come. Seven times - a mark of perfection! Nature perfectly worn out as it were; faith put to the test: then He comes. One good woman got the blessing remarkably, and got the remarkable testimony to her faith. She argued with the Lord, using His own discouraging word as an argument for a blessing. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." O for faith to argue as she did, and O, the blessing is sure to come. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Go home. There is the blessing you sought, in a healed daughter. And you will find in time; God's time; seven times: that whatever trouble you have taken to God and dealt with by faith on the throne of His heavenly grace, will fall down flat. Then you will say - 'I had no hand in this matter. I touched it not. God has done it all.' What then? Boasting is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore, the believing heart says - 'Now I will put the crown on the right Head. He shall wear it. He shall be glorified all through.' Says the believing soul thus blessed - 'Come my friends and I will tell you what God has done for me. He has wrought marvelously. My privilege has been that of Manoah and his wife, even to look on, while the angel of the Lord has done wondrously!' O believer, God will make you strong, and that faith of yours, being energised by the Holy Ghost, shall lay hold of omnipotence, employing the arm and the wisdom and the goodness and the faithfulness of God and you will find all will come well at last. Amen.