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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 3 May 1936

HEBREWS 12 v 1,2,and 3

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

I endeavoured on Friday to expound the first verse only. "Wherefore", on account of what has gone before; considering the miracle of faith that the 11 chapter exhibits. The faithfulness of God to His people and their faith in Him, enabling them to hold fast to the end, the Apostle brings before us, and says on account of all this, the great cloud of witnesses compassing us. Not a star here or another there, but a whole cloud, like the bow compassing the heavens and compassing us. And they are witnesses - do not forget that - they have a testimony, they speak for God. They do not speak for themselves, do not boast of their faith and their faithfulness and their endurance. They just say this, as God's mouth, we humbly believe God stood by us and brought us through. Some would not accept offered deliverance, deliverance offered on the condition of their blaspheming Christ's holy Name; and these would not accept it because faith held them to Christ, and so they were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. These noble believers held fast. We have example of backsliding, and drawing back from God in the Scripture. The carcasses of men who fell in the wilderness are set before us as an awful example of what unbelief can accomplish in those who are possessed by it. It should, and would if we rightly felt such things, fill us with awe and move us to pray: "Hold Thou me up". "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my

footsteps slip not." Vital religion is a mystery; how that one, one minute is dead in trespasses and sins, is the servant of sin, and the next has implanted a holy principle of life by the Holy Ghost. He remains a sinner, but he mourns, sighs, confesses, prays, believes, and ultimately reaches heaven. What a mystery, the breath of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost breathing eternal life into that soul, conveying it from Christ. The sinner at the time does not know what has happened. Something has come; he realises not what and perhaps in some cases there is long waiting, but the end comes, that is the end of uncertainty, of unbelief as to its dominion; the sweet sprinkling of the conscience by the blood of Christ. The soul washed in regeneration gets the cleansing on the conscience of the blood of Christ and peace comes; not abiding, without interruption, but it comes: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding", and to such people this word is: "Let us lay aside every weight" - plenty of weights we have - "and the sin which doth so easily beset us" - which, looking at the examples of faith in the preceding chapter, we may confidently say is unbelief, the first sin of our father Adam. If he had continued in the faith God gave to him, His creature, and His pure, upright subject, he would not have fallen, and that sin easily besets a child of God. The least delay on the part of God to answer, the least difficulty in the path, the least stumbling that may be set before a person will bring out this wickedness, this master sin, this daring contradiction of God - unbelief. What is it to lay it aside? I remarked on Friday, it is to pray against it. You cannot take it up and cut the throat of it; you cannot say I will have nothing more to do with you; I will never again listen to you. But when faith is in exercise you go to God and pray for the forgiveness of that great sin, and the subjection of it. That, as I judge, is the best way to lay it aside; the best way to overcome it.

Brethren let us praise the Lord,
Exalt His blessed Name;
Let us hear and keep His word;
His glory be our aim.

"and what is it" the verse continues; "and what is it"

Let us resolutely strive
To work God's work with full intent;
And what is it? To believe
On Him whom He hath sent (Hart's Hymns No. 23)

I always regret that this verse is left out of our book. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith". Here is set before us one of the greatest difficulties that a believer has: "Looking unto Jesus". It should not be, it would not be, if we were not so carnal, and so unbelieving. There are two words one would say about this. First, looking away from everything else; not an easy thing. There is one object more difficult to look away from than all others together; that is self. The biggest idol you can ever have, the greatest stumblingblock that can ever be in your way, the most woeful contradiction of God that can ever be offered Him, is in this wicked thing, self. I am sure some of you sympathise with Rutherford, a quotation that I have named before - "O that I had not a myself." It is this myself that is so hurtful. What, give up this, forsake that pleasure? Turn my back on this and on that? Leave these friends, these associations? The claim of self is an insistent claim and nothing short of the power of God put forth in faith can enable us to turn away from it. Happy the man who can honestly say

Self in myself I hate
Tis matter of my moan

If you did not fall by self, you would never need anything else in the way of fear. The Lord give us grace to look away from self, from the world - Do you remember, have you considered, the Word of God? "If any man will be a friend of the world he is the enemy of God". Not an easy word to believe and far from easy to put into practice. Leave the world? Yet Christ said unless a man does that and denies himself and takes up his cross, he cannot be His disciple. O,woeful thing, subjection to this world. Woe unto us; if any single sin in us prevails we are the servants of that sin. You look away from that if you have real faith; occasionally you look away from that. Perhaps more difficult than other things is this, to look away from what you

hope have been God's merciful helps to you. I refer you to the 70 disciples who had been sent by Christ on a mission, and they were very successful. They returned to Christ, their Master, and related to Him their success; how that spirits were subject unto them and that they did this and that; and what did Christ say? He did not discourage them; He did not say, O there is nothing in that, but He did say this - "Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven". A great thing that. What, put aside that victory, that mercy, that good experience? Comparatively, yes. It is a great thing to be blessed with grace; wonderful to have a victory for an hour over any sin; wonderful to feel the love of God in your heart; wonderful to be assured of your interest in Christ and of Christ's interest in you, but there is more in having your name written in heaven than that experience. "Rather", said Jesus, "rejoice in that your names are written in heaven." Can you look away from that?

Look away from your discouragements, there are many; from God's delays to answer you; they are trying. Look away from your afflictions; they are painful. Look away from the piercing of sorrow that you have. Look away from these things; forget them, as it were, for there is only one abiding, glorious Object for faith. Look away from your endeavours. Any professor attempting to conquer sin and leave, what he would think, the sinful life, is sinning in that endeavour. May I not endeavour? It depends on how you endeavour. If you say, these vain thoughts I will try to overcome; that vagrant sin, I will arrest if I can, you are sinning in all that. Is it wrong? It is wrong if you do it wrongly. What must I do? You can do nothing. What then? Lie down? No; if you have faith, this is what you will be enabled by the Holy Ghost to do - Take your eyes from every object; your mind, your thought from every self-endeavour, and cast the eye of your faith on that Person named in the text - "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith."

The mystery of godliness is in the Person of Jesus Christ. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh". Great is the mystery of religion that unites the soul to this Jesus, and great is the mystery of faith that leaves the world and leaves sin and leaves self and leaves endeavours and leaves efforts; in a right way leaves them and casts itself on Jesus. Vital religion has its

origin in Christ; its source is there. Grace to maintain it is in Him; love to embrace the sinner is in Him; the righteousness to justify the sinner is His; the holiness to sanctify the sinner is His; the wisdom to show the way from hell to heaven is His. "I wisdom dwell with prudence". The entrance into glory is by Him. If that is true, where else should we look? To whom else shall we go? If that is true then it may be a proper thing for me to put this question to you. Do you know what it is to look to Him; to go, a poor, distraut, polluted creature and cast your soul with all its undying interests on Him? That is the way of life which is above to the wise that he may depart from hell beneath.

"Looking unto Jesus". First unto His Person. There is no man since the fall of Adam who has ever been absolutely acceptable to God in all perfection, but the Man Christ Jesus, and no man will ever be perfect but in Him. Well, if that is so, how wonderful and blessed a thing it is to have faith to turn to Him. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" They told the Lord about the conjectures that were made. Leaving all those guesses, He turns to these loved ones and says - "Whom do ye say that I am?" Now let me put that question to you as well as to myself. Whom do you say Jesus is? Have we had such a revelation of Him in our hearts as to cause us to say: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Is there any other you would go to? Has He a representative? The Pope says, yes, I am His vicar. The Modernist says yes, my reason rejects Him. Faith says, no other; herein let self and the world be abased; herein let all be lost; Christ and Christ alone will do. Is it not wonderful to believe this? It is a wonder to me that I believe this, for I am an infidel by nature, and so are you, all infidels. We have all got infidelity in us. O to have the light of life to shine into our hearts; for the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus Christ as possessing life, eternal life, and as lovingly giving it to His disciples. To turn to Him with our failures and sins, and wickedness. To go to Him by faith, believing and confessing that we have got a heart of which Jeremiah was inspired to write: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it". Sometimes you may have tried to cover it with your hand. You will never do it. When faith is in exercise, it goes honestly to confess this. We do not know much about it; it is unfathomable. "Deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked."

"Looking unto Jesus" to justify us. What follows in this second verse will tell us this, the One to look to is Jesus as crucified. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Faith is a mysterious grace, a wonderful principle; a principle that does rely. In the face of all contradiction, dispute, murmuring and blasphemy; all the contradictions of modernism, and popery, of Christian Scientists. and every other religious evil, as well as open profanity, faith believes Jesus Christ. You come to that at times, you are brought to it, you who have faith; it just comes to this

None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good

Some of you may be groaning more or less constantly nowadays because you fail, you fall; your desires get languid; your hope, if you have any, all but dies, and corruptions which you would fain stamp on, rise and make you their servants. What a sad case, and you may be quite ready to give up; say I must give it all up. I fail, I fall, I mistake things, I go wrong constantly. If you have a grain of faith as a mustard seed, it wont let you give up. The Spirit will strengthen it mysteriously, and, without your perhaps knowing it to be His work, He will strengthen faith and you will say, I must go again to Him; I must once more pray to Him; I must again put my bad case before Him. Well, that is the work of the Spirit, the work of faith. You forget that perhaps, God does not. He is not unmindful of the labour of love and faith. What, cannot you give it up? What, do you not give it up? One of our old members at Lutterworth went one day to Mr De Fraine, our Pastor, and said I must ask you to take my name off the Church Book. Why? Because I fail so, and I am wrong I am afraid. Well, the Pastor said, and where will you go? Will you go to the world? O I cannot do that, she said. And so if it were put to some of you, will you go to the world; will you try to take pleasure in old, past and forsaken things? you say humbly, and perhaps with tears, I cannot do that. To

whom shall I go? To my friends? No. I have had to give up that one and that one. Well, faith says, I have only One to go to; there is only One Person I would apply to for help and relief, and cleansing and salvation, and heaven; that One is Jesus. Dear friends, let me draw your attention to what God has given Him. God given Him? Is He not God's Son? Yes, but God gave Him something. God gave Him grace to save His people before the world began. All life God gave Him, all grace God gave Him. Then, having in the counsel of peace everything the church could possibly need and desire, He sent Him in the fullness of time. In the fullness of time appointed God sent His Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. Can you turn your eyes to that fullness? Can you plead that fullness? When you have no excuse to offer for that sin, for that lapse, for that unbelief, for that worldliness; when you have no excuse to offer for your wandering away from God through unbelief, you go and confess and then say, for Christ's sake, save me. I thought the other day, and said to the people at Manchester, this. Everything that we attempt in the way of religion without Christ is sin. What if I try to be holy? If you try to be holy apart from the cross, you sin in that trying. If you try to arrest and overcome and trample any sin under your feet, apart from the cross, you sin. O, the thought of this, the very thought that I have done it - the thought some of you may have that you have done it - may fill with shame; turning away from Christ. In the important chapter I read just now there is an exhortation which we do well to heed. "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." There is, in every single act of departing from God, the nature of apostasy. This has made me shake sometimes. The nature of it, but not the act of it; distinguish if you can. The act of apostasy is cursing and putting Christ to an open shame. I have not done that. O that is a beautiful word in the Word of God. "The Lord knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust". He knows the inner frame of faith when you would go to Him and cleave to Him and say, I am an empty vessel; do not fill me with wrath; fill me with mercy. Every vessel shall be full. There will be no empty vessels in eternity. Either bliss will fill us, or just, endless punishment. "Looking unto Jesus". Looking to His power to save, looking to His love to embrace, looking to His righteousness to justify; looking to His holiness to sanctify; looking to His wisdom to guide. O what a

Christ He is. Worthy He is to be exalted in every pulpit, in every heart of every sinner. None but Jesus. Happy is the man who says, let Him be exalted. Who prays to be allowed, taught, to join with lispings in his spirit, the song: "Worthy is the Lamb". O poor believer, look to Him; you cannot fail then. When you look at your miserable, your fallen nature, you cannot stand. When you hang on Him, hanker after more knowledge of Him, cleave to Him with a living, though weak, faith; hang about Him with a love that seems to be going out, and a hope that is damped by some failing, some fall, He is more pleased than you think He can be with you. You can hardly think He will ever be pleased with you. There is nothing pleases Christ more than the movings of faith toward Him in the heart. Favourites of heaven are you who have this faith in you. "..... saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works", and the best of all works you have in your heart. Christ is most glorified in your heart, much more than by your mouth or your hands. These are not to be despised, but that is the best. Cleave to Him. In a feeble way this is my life, to cleave to Him. He alone knows how I run away from Him. O, but I cannot do without Him. Can you? Would you, if you could? Would you, if you could? You will humbly say, Lord help me to keep close to Thee. Keep me from making professions of loyalty. Give me grace to humbly cleave to Thee and let all else go. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith". Everything needed for faith and glory Jesus Christ possesses. Well dear friends, what an Object for faith. When a man's eye is on the world he is looking at tinsel, rubbish, death. When the eye of faith is on Christ, he is looking at eternity in the Son of God. He is looking at infinite purity, infinite sufficiency, in the Surety, the Mediator, in the Redeemer. Of if my eyes were on Him more; if yours were

O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellencies trace
Could we His Person learn to prize
We more should prize His grace

Faith brings a freshness into the mind at times; it brings a sweetness into the soul; it brings a spirituality; it brings a tenderness; it brings a desire for the glory of God. "Looking unto

Jesus". O the myriads of eyes on Him in glory. O the mercy for us in this poor world and our poor condition before God by nature, to have an eye on Him. Think of it! Who gave you the eye of faith? The seeing eye, the Lord hath created. Nobody can see the kingdom of God until born again and when born again the eye is there, looking unto Him.

Looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life. Now may the Lord help us; I cannot finish it; I never shall be able to. This Person, Jesus, the Son of God and Man, is the Object of praise and glory and will be throughout eternity and shall we, poor sinners, now groaning and panting and sighing and fainting, shall we be there? Dear friends, bless Him for a hope of being there. O but I have got so much to depress me. Well you have not so much to depress you as there is in Christ to lift you up. A smile from Him will work wonders in your soul. I must leave it now; I do not expect to speak so long, for the much preaching in the North tired me a good deal. If a single word is at all useful to you, you must know to whom you must give the praise.

AMEN.