

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 10 June 1923

Hebrews 12 verses 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 that
is 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

This is a very full word, full of instruction, full of
divine meaning, and full of consolation, but we need that it
should be opened and applied to us. Then, as the Spirit might be
pleased to show us what it means, what it contains, we should
value it and feel the attraction of it and the power of it and
the importance of it. I drew your attention this morning to the
first part of the first verse, made some remarks upon faith, and
upon the laying aside of every weight, the sin which doth so
easily beset us. The second part of the exhortation in this
verse is this - "And let us run with patience the race that is
set before us", a figure of speech setting forth the race that
the people of God are to run from earth to heaven, from sin to
holiness, from self to Christ, from the world to the throne of
God's heavenly grace. Run from evil company to the company of
innumerable angels and spirits of just men made perfect and to
Jesus above all else. Running a race requires the laying aside
of every encumbrance, everything calculated to entangle and
hinder the feet and to burden the body, so as to retard the runner
in his race. This is no easy thing in spiritual life - And
hastening unto the day and coming of the Lord - for the weights
that we are here to lay aside are not weights to nature;

pleasures, possessions, things we esteem; and to lay these aside is a conflict. They are a burden to the spirit, a hindrance to the soul, a clog round the feet, so as that running with these weights is difficult and all but impossible. The sin that so easily besets us, the corruption of our nature manifesting itself in the various passions and sins which were spoken of in the Scriptures and which we are commanded to put off make it most difficult to move in the ways of God. Therefore, the Holy Ghost says by Paul let us lay these aside. "Put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created him" Then he continues the exhortation in the second part. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" Intimately connected with this is the word that follows. "Looking unto Jesus" whose grace is necessary, whose power is necessary and to dwell with whom for ever is the great attraction, and as an encouraging example to run with patience His own case in suffering is set before us. "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". And with the disposition to weariness and faintness that is in us all who fear the Lord, the readiness to give in, to cast all the armour off, the readiness to conclude that because the way is so rough, the difficulties so many, the prospect often so dimmed as hardly to be seen at all, we are exhorted still further to consider the Lord Jesus, to consider Him in this particular respect that He endured contradiction, opposition against Himself, and if He is not only our Saviour but also our example, that we should walk in His steps, and if He endured contradiction and opposition even to the very end of His race here to the time when He said "It is finished" may we - this is the word set before us - may we consider Him. Lest weariness in the way, weariness of God, weariness of the strife and faintness respecting continuance, lest this should come to us, consider Him. It behoves every servant of the most high God to look narrowly into the Scriptures and as enabled bring forth things new and old out of the treasure of his own experience wrought in him by the blessed Spirit and according to the Word of God. And I would as enabled bring before you this evening the things which are most important to

you as to myself. Some of us profess to be pilgrims and strangers in the earth. We profess that there is nothing here can satisfy, not house, nor gold, nor land, that nothing here can do us good, and yet, contrary to that profession, how often are we engaged in looking into, deeply concerned about, hampering ourselves with, the things which can but hinder and hurt and wound the conscience and grieve and vex the Holy Spirit. Here we are told to run the race, exhorted to do it, and this word "run" sets before us the motion of faith in all the people of God, when it is rightly led and influenced by the Eternal Spirit. Faith's proper object is God; its proper object for salvation is Jesus Christ in His Person and His work and to reach Him and hide in Him and find Him to be the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, to hope in His mercy, to look for His heaven, to seek His society here and hope for it hereafter through Eternity. This is the labour of faith, here likened to a man running a race. It is a prize set before the people of God. Many run only one is crowned. So run, says the Spirit by Paul in another place that ye may obtain. It is no easy thing. I should be no friend to you nor honest in the ministry to my conscience and the Scriptures if I at all allowed you to think or set before you that it was an easy thing to run from earth to heaven. It is not easy. The reason of its being difficult is that we are sinners, that we have sin cleaving to us, that it seems, for the time, to be a part of the warp and woof of our very nature, that therefore it is not to be put off easily. Its claims are insistent and many; there is a persistency in sin that seems to know no shame at all; it will ever be pressing its claims on us; you must do this, you must do that. Here you must turn your eyes; there some carnal object fixes your gaze; and these things, temptations, allurements, claims of sin and peristent claims, these make the difficulty. In itself how plain and easy is wisdom's way; in Himself how beautiful and attractive is the Lord Jesus; in the Scripture how beautifully is it set forth; the ways of wisdom are pleasantness and all her paths are peace, and God, how gracious, Christ, how glorious, the atonement, how full, justification, how complete, promises, how absolute, power, how infinite, everything to make the way plain, straight and easy. But sin in us, the devil tempting us, lust provoking us,

pride of the eye turning us aside, these things make the path very difficult. The prize is distant sometimes and seems out of reach; heaven, far off, very far off, and little hope perhaps of attaining to it. The King in His beauty is in the land which is very far off and who can reach that land, who can hope to see Him? It is written by Hart and we sing of it sometimes

If this be Lord Thy way
Then who can hope to gain
That prize such numbers never seek
Such numbers seek in vain

And what said Christ "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it". Strait because of our sins; narrow because it allows none of those sins which are in us, allows no indulgence of sin, of lust, of worldliness, covetousness which is idolatry, and every sort of evil that we have. These are all solemnly forbidden, and so with regard to true religion it is said "Strait is the gate" very very strait, like the needle's eye, and narrow is the way when you are in it and few there be that find it. If that is so, and if again we consider that of the four hearers of the gospel in the parable of the Sower, three were wrong, only one right; if we consider the ease with which we receive temptations, the readiness of our nature to indulge every sin that is in us in the root, we shall see and feel too the solemn and awful difficulty there is in respect of this word "Run with patience the race that is set before us".

And let me name another difficulty, and that is the peculiar dealings of God with His people sometimes. Take, for instance, Abraham. He received the promise of a son, he waited twenty years for the fulfilment of it, waited, that is to say until it was naturally impossible for him to receive the son. Take the Lord's word to Jacob that He would be with him in all places whithersoever he went and would not leave him. Twenty years Jacob laboured with Laban who deceived him over and over again, ten times changed his wages. How difficult it was for him. Take Moses, He thought when he went and vindicated the Hebrew by

slaying the Egyptian that his people would understand that God intended to deliver them by him. Stephen tells us this that Moses was not ready for that leadership to which he was predestinated; he must go to the back side of the desert and remain there for 40 years and then when God's time was ready, Moses was not ready in his own judgment. I cannot go, Lord, I am not eloquent; I am slow of speech; I am not fit to guide, to lead these people. Send by whom Thou wilt send. God's dealings with some of you may be of a nature to discourage you for a time; He may have told you some good things but you have not realised them yet, and unbelief in you says that you did not receive them from him; you only imagined that they came. Unbelief says the time is so long, you cannot expect that God shall come and bless you, you did not receive things from Him. And so running is difficult. Here is a stumbling block, there is a hole in the road, and how are you to get past it, how shall you get over it? All kinds of difficulties come. The need therefore of this word "patience"; patience means endurance, continuance. If ye continue in the faith. "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved". Putting on the armour is one thing; continuing to fight until victory is obtained is another thing. Patience, O what a grace it is. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" Here are two places, two terms; a place from which you start and a place for which you set out. Where do you start from? From what spot did you start in your pilgrimage? Was it from the City of Destruction? Was it with the cry in your heart, life, life, eternal life? Was it with the solemn belief that if you remained where you were you must be involved in the inevitable ruin and destruction of the place? Look at the beginning; it wont hurt it nor you. Look at the beginning. How did you start on this race? Frightened, alarmed, distressed, distracted, convinced that you were near destruction, that destruction was hanging over you, that if you remained there you must be swallowed up? Therefore you ran from that place hardly knowing how you moved or where you were going. Still you ran; like Abraham you went out not knowing wither you went. But go out you must. No wife, no children, no business, no interest could prevent you moving out, and running out of that place, because there was destruction threatened, hanging over you. That is the place to start from,

not some pleasing religiosity in your mind, not some natural liking to the Scriptures and to chapel, not that, but a solemn sense more or less distinct in you that you were ruined, that wrath was hanging over you. More or less distinct it was and you felt yourself to be a sinner although neither then, nor now perhaps, could you, can you say, that the convictions were remarkable or clear. Neither then nor now perhaps could you say that any particular Scriptures came to you, but that you just felt gradually and more and more felt that you were ruined, a sinner exposed to the wrath of God, that you must flee, if possible, from the wrath to come, but how to flee, where to flee to, you knew not. You were uneasy, miserable; your pleasures were spoiled, your life was marred, your prospects were ruined; you were just a poor sinner. And you had to start, and to start was like this sometimes, you cried "God be merciful to me a sinner". Sometimes you looked on the saints and thought O I wish I were one of them. Sometimes looked into the Bible and got more condemnation than before; sometimes got a little encouragement; sometimes in hearing, if you were a hearer of the truth, you might hear something about Jesus Christ and that would draw you. Sometimes you might hear of the Holy Spirit and that would make you long for that Spirit to be your teacher and your guide, and that He would give you a broken heart, that He would give you love to God, love to Jesus Christ, that He would tell you that your sins were forgiven. And so you started, and I would say, a good start, a good start. That was a good start that the thief made when he said "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"; a good start that the publican made when he said "God be merciful to me a sinner"; that Paul made, when Saul of Tarsus, he said "What wilt Thou have me to do"; that the jailer made when he said "Sir what must I do to be saved"; that Lydia made when her heart was opened to attend to the things that the Apostles preached and she said to them "If ye have judged me to be faithful come into my house". These were all racers; they began to run in that way. Faith pointed out the road, prayer carried them to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and they left the world behind them, carried their sins in their confessions to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and sought to be delivered from them. Run, O sinner, you who have started this way. Says

Paul put these things off that hinder you and run with patience the race that is set before you. How is this race set before sinners? It is set before them in the very Person, blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Gospel tells poor sinners who are perishing in their own feelings and dying in their sins as the Lord put it by Ezekiel; he tells such poor sinners that there is a Saviour and a great one, that Christ is the Friend of sinners, that God His Father made Him to be sin who knew no sin, that He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And this blessed gospel so set forth is made the the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. This is how the race is set before sinners, and this is the reason that they do not beat the air uncertainly, nor run whither they know not where, nor aim at, they know not what. They have a certain, if I may use the word, a certain definiteness in their spirits, which is expressed by them thus "God be merciful to me a sinner". "Jesus reveal Thyself to me; clothe me in Thy righteousness; cleanse me by Thy blood; feed me with Thy flesh; give me to drink of that blood which Thou didst freely shed". There is a point in prayer, the prayer of faith, which shall save the sick soul. Now I should think that however some of you may doubt from day to day whether you have ever started right, whether you have got a right principle, if you have followed me in these remarks, you will not be able to put yourselves outside these runners. And if you cannot put yourselves outside these runners, if, that is to say, you really are among them, then God help you to notice this, you are running for heaven, that is running for Christ. Paul, in the chapter which I read, was one of these runners, and a wonderful runner he was. He put off things which were his; all his privileges; all his knowledge; all his attainments; he said I count them all loss; they are all loss, they are dung, they are all dross to me. I put them all off because there is One I would fain know and win; that I may win and be found in Him. But of all the things that he must have found, that some of us have found, that every child of God will find difficult, this is the most difficult; to run as a poor, lost naked creature to the Lord Jesus Christ. But that is before us; we are running for Him. Said the Psalmist "My soul followeth hard after God" and in the midst of his persecutions it was his cry - you put me out of

God's heritage. He said O Lord the swallow hath found a nest, the sparrow hath found a nest where she may lay her young, even thine altars O Lord of Hosts. Do bring me to Thyself. Is that your cry? O to be running after Christ is a great thing. To know Him and the power of His resurrection was Paul's great ambition, his great desire. He was a Christlike man and he wanted to be so more and more; to be found in Him not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but that which was through the faith of Christ the righteousness which was of God by faith. And this running after Him, following after Him means as to the end, running for heaven. One says, we sing it sometimes, "And there I long to be". No enemy will come there, no friend will leave us there, the Saviour will be with us there, holiness will be ours there, eternal felicity will be ours there, and there it is that we want to be. After that these runners run and with patience. This word patience is very important in this connection; it means, as I have said, endurance, continuance. If ye endure chastening, if ye endure to the end, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled; ye are God's house if ye continue in the faith. What a solemn consideration it is; to start is one thing; to finish is another. And this starting which I have mentioned, where it is of God, is sure to find the end, and the end good. O what a great thing it is to be running this race. But the Holy Ghost knowing the difficulties which would attend every runner exhorts them to do this looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Ah there is the object, and if we have faith, there will be from time to time a real looking to Him from everything else, and every one else. Looking to Him means believing on Him. "This is the will of Him that sent Me that everyone that seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life and I will raise Him up at the last day" This believing on Christ is the blessed work of a living soul, faith being given him, and the object of faith being revealed to him, and thus God's people are real believers in Jesus Christ. And who is an overcomer or, to keep close to the text, who wins? John says "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" And who believes that? "We" says John again "We know that He is come" that is the Son of God "and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true". You have

got as far as that, have not some of you? "We know that the Son of God is come". In the blessed word we see it; we have felt it in our souls at times; we know that He is come, that He put away sin, that He entered into heaven, that He is there interceding and this knowledge has a certain effect. It makes you follow on. If you know that the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, then you will never be content until you say of Him "Who loved me and gave Himself for me". "Looking unto Him," and looking unto Him in a particular consideration, "who endured the cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of God" and this was before Him in His sorrows and afflictions; He had a joy set before Him; this attracted Him; the joy set before Christ was the joy of the destruction of sin and Satan in and for His people and having them with Him finally. Ah that was before Him, that a company of sinners whom no man could number should have deliverance from their sin and be all holy like Himself; that was the joy. Sinners such as we are, such as some of us feel ourselves to be, yet destined to be like Christ, as holy as Christ is, and eventually to be where He is and with Him. And for this joy He despised the shame, endured the cross, despised the shame of it, and is now, having endured all, at the right hand of the throne of God. And what is the joy set before a runner? What is the joy set before one who is started in the heavenly race? Very many his difficulties may be and very weak he may feel, very unable to run, very ready to faint in his mind. What is the joy that is set before him, set before him in the Scriptures, set before him sometimes by the Holy Spirit so that he looks on it as that which he hopes to obtain? Is it not this? Full salvation; redemption made known; Jesus Christ revealed in the heart and formed there the hope of glory? Is it not union with Christ, communion with Him, and everlasting felicity in Him? Is it not likeness to Him? "We know not what we shall be but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is"

Now dear friends you see many things to discourage you; you see your afflictions and they are not light nor are they for a moment when you see them. "Our light affliction is but for a moment", under God; a different consideration from the natural

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one. You see your mortifications, your weakness, your ignorance, your disposition to sin, your continually turning aside from the Lord by nature, you see these things; you see the difficulties of the way, many, great, insurmountable apparently, you see these things. You see the devil, you see him in the Scriptures, see him as it were near you, feel him, feel his hand on you as it were, feel his hellish power, understand something of his terrible temptations, how they come to you. Here is an infidel thought injected; here is a horrible thing brought before your eye; there is something set upon your mind. These things come from the enemy and you say in your fears and despondency - If this be Lord Thy way, how can I, a worm so feeble, so ready to be crushed, expect to get honourably through. Now says Paul, consider Christ, look to Him, a sufferer, see Him a real Man, groaning, gasping, tempted, sweating blood, at every sacred pore of His body; see Him tempted of the devil; see Him hated of men, hear their blasphemies - He hath a devil and is mad. He is a friend of publicans and sinners, a gluttonous man and a winebibber. Hear them contradicting Him at every turn - He casts out devils by the prince of devils. Did the Captain suffer this, and shall his army have an easy way, a battle without any blood shed; shall they not hear the sound of battle and the noise of war? Shall these runners find the turf always soft to their feet and easy for running? Shall They meet no difficulties? Will the devil help them? Will sin help them? They are neither of them annihilated; neither is non-existent to them. Shall these help them? No, they are foes to them. They stand in the way - Apollyon straddles across the way as Bunyan speaks. But is this all? I would not like to leave it here. No my friends,

Our Captain stood the fiery test
And we shall stand through Him

Consider Him, contradicted at every turn, who, for the joy that was set before Him. Now sometimes this joy of getting through, honourably through, is set before us. Ah says the dear Saviour to a weak sinner, "I will never leave you, I will never forsake you". To one who is ignorant of the way, He says "This is the

way, walk ye in it. And if the creature should say but how shall I see the way, then He will let you see it lined with blood

And lest we should mistake the way
He lines it out with blood

You see the atonement, that is the way. You see justification, that is the way. You see intercession by Christ, that is the way. You see the promise of help, that is the way. It is set before us and the end is seen. Yes, faith sees the end and sometimes faith is so strengthened and fortified against all enemies and opposition as to say

Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven

Why, Christ would not be complete if any part of His body were missing. He hates to put away. He hates to do it. Therefore He sets before His people this joy. Now this joy I would briefly speak about. It is the joy of being justified, of being sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. And if some of you were asked, now what would be the greatest joy you could have this evening, what would be the sweetest comfort with which you could retire to rest, I believe you would say this, to be assured of an interest in Christ, to be able to say He loved us and gave Himself for us, to have no doubt, to have every fear taken away, and the sweet peace of God ruling your heart and keeping your mind. That is the truth, is it not, with respect to some of you? Well now that is before you. May the Lord help you, as here He exhorts, to run with patience after this. This is a blessed promise. Jesus Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. This is before poor people who have started from the City of Destruction and are on their way to heaven. They want this. This shall not be lacking to them always.

Another thing set before these people is this, union with Christ and communion. I am the Vine, ye are the branches. And some of you perhaps have said when reading that or hearing it quoted I do not know what it means, I wish I did. Now when Christ comes to you, is revealed in you and you feel that He belongs to you, and you belong to Him, that will be an opening of the word "I am the Vine ye are the branches" in Him, and that is the point, you are in Him. He says I abide in you; cleave to Me, hold fast the word of My patience. Cleave to My righteousness, to My precious blood, to My atoning work, to My intercession and you are in Me. Communion, when He gives you His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. When He opens some of His blessed secrets to your heart, the secret of His eternal love for you, the secret of His redeeming work for you. When He opens these secrets, when He opens the secret of the Covenant of Grace, and shows you as He showed Peter that the Gentiles were in it, the great sheet let down from heaven, knit at the four corners thereof, in which were all manner of four footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of heaven; unclean things there. But though called unclean by Peter, as they seemed to him and you, said the Lord, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common". And you see yourself there, a cleansed person in the Covenant of Grace. This is set before people, the Lord's people, in the gospel, these blessings. Then another blessing, final perseverance. How often you think, shall I get through? Will the Lord bring me honourably to my grave, or shall I die not desired? Will the Lord help me? Will He be with me in the flood, in the flame, in the hour of temptation or shall I be found alone? I have a religion; will it be proved to be right? Now the doctrine of the final persevering of the saints is set before the faith of all of them but then they want it a little closer than that. They want it as Hart got it

To perseverance I agree
The thing to me is clear
Because the Lord has promised me
That I shall persevere

O to be held on . If you are held on, you will hold on; you

will keep the word of Christ's patience. The word of His kingdom is a word of endurance, of perseverance to the end, and so that is set before His people.

Another thing which will be a joy set before them is this. Victory over the last enemy. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. If some of you were to die tonight would the enemy be destroyed or would it destroy you? Have you a ground of hope, a reason in your own consciences to hope that the enemy would be destroyed, that you would go to be where no foe enters, to be absent from the body, present with the Lord? Now if you have not that assurance there it is in the blessed gospel, and may the Lord help you to run to it to run after the sacred persuasion by the Spirit that that awaits you, final victory. Final, even with regard to the body, for that is to participate in the blessings of the everlasting gospel.

And finally this is the joy, Christ is in heaven, and that is where every child of God longs to be in God's time. That is the place where there is no sin. Holiness and happiness will fill every vessel of mercy hereafter. They begin here; they have holiness from the new birth; they have happiness when Christ speaks blessings to them. Then they shall be filled hereafter with holiness and happiness. Consider Christ; consider what He endured; the cross to save His people. Consider that He despised the shame, and shall we be ashamed? Poor creatures as we are, shall we be ashamed? The only thing to be ashamed of is sin; to be ashamed of our shame, but glory in the cross of Christ is a great matter and not easy. It is impossible to flesh and blood. This then is set before us. Consider Him; look to Him; remember what He endured. Endured the cross, so terrible to Him, despised the shame so grievous to His spotless humanity, to be covered with the ignominy of that accursed tree. But He even despised it, that is would not, as it were, look at it. It had no effect to deter Him from endurance. And so may we be encouraged by this great example. For Christ redeeming His people is their Redeemer. Christ set before them as enduring is their pattern and exemplar. And so the Apostle here sets Him before us. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest

ye be wearied and faint in your minds" and be ready to give in and quit the field, hopeless. Consider the Lord Jesus . May the Holy Ghost help us. And if the remarks I have made on this mighty subject today be at all useful and should help any of you to seek courage and strength to run the race and have set before you the joy that all the saints have set before them in the gospel, and in their hearts at times, I shall be thankful. May the Lord help each child of His to remember this word and read, as I have said this this morning, read the 11 Chapter of this Epistle. There you will see what the saints endured who have gone before, and you may find some help and instruction, and courage from the consideration.

AMEN.