

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 23 February 1936

HEBREWS 13 v 7 and 8

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

The gospel ministry is a divine institution; God has set it in the Church. First Apostles, then Pastors and Teachers, God has set in the Church. For us, as a little body, those officers are merged into one, Pastors, and we have very few which is a sign, not for good, but evil. A sign, not of God's good pleasure; on the contrary, He must have a controversy with us, and woe unto us, we seem not to know it. The end of God in setting the ministry in the Church is to call, gather together, the sheep, until there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. The ministry that is not visibly used for these ends cannot be said to be of God, and this will prove a trial to many a man. Building is a part of the ministry, and Paul teaches in the Corinthians that there is great care necessary on the part of the ministers as builders; that they should be careful about the materials they build on the one foundation. If they build wood, hay, stubble, a fire will come and burn up those bits of rubbish and the minister will suffer loss and some shame if he lives to see that. The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, uses this wonderful language to the Church of God for, though writing to the Hebrews, the dispersion of that day, this verse, equally with the whole Scripture, has authority today; it lives today, where we have grace and understanding to obey the word: "Remember them that have the rule over you". This word rule, may be very unpleasant to many professors but it is a divine word and a minister, a pastor, is a ruler, but he is not to rule in bidding the servants, but to be a helper of the faith and joy of the Church of God, and the things in which he rules are the things of God. He will never rule any conscience nor wish to rule any conscience except by that power that God gives to his ministry, and he can never wish for any better position than this will give him in the

esteem and affections of the people of God. To the Thessalonians the Apostle writes: "And we beseech you brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." 1 Thessalonians 5 v 12/13. Admonition is all but out of fashion today but it is according to the word of God, and I would admonish you my brethren to take great heed, careful, prayerful, heed to the text: "Remember them which have the rule over you". I have no cause to complain, speaking generally, of your regard for me, but this is a word belonging to the whole church of God. Their rule is in the truth, not otherwise, either in the pulpit or in a church meeting. The rule of the Pastor is in the truth, by the truth, and the position he holds, a good position, is begotten for him in the Church by his being enabled to handle the Word of God. Here it is put "who have spoken unto you the word of God." Deceased ministers at that time and living ministers may be included in this word: "Who have spoken unto you the word of God", which means they preached the gospel; and what a gospel, the eternal love of God in giving His only begotten Son, the love of the eternal Son of God in freely giving Himself, the love of the eternal Spirit in quickening each member of the mystical body of Christ. That is the gospel, added to which you find numberless exhortations, precepts, admonitions, commandments, for the Apostle Paul speaks of the commandments of the holy apostles and prophets of the Lord. Commandments are not, therefore, confined to the law which kills but are found in the gospel which gives life, and every child of God at some time or other will find in his heart to pray this: Command what Thou wilt, but give me power to obey. Give me power, give me grace, then command what Thou wilt. Remember them in esteem, a spiritual esteem, because they have, out of weakness, spoken the word of God to you. Out of weakness? Yes, God only knows what that feeling of weakness is; how the minister may, before a service, out of anguish of spirit pray with Moses: If Thy presence go not with me carry me not up to the pulpit. God only knows how that prayer goes out of the heart, Lord do not carry me up to the pulpit for the next service if Thy presence go not with me. There is a labour. Remember them which labour among you, labouring in the word of God. It used to be said of the ministers that they were painful ministers, painful in their labour, in their desire. They study, or should study, to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed,

rightly dividing the word of truth. Yet O the shame that a minister may feel at the close of a service; what he ought to have said and did not, and things which he thinks about, reflects upon as having said. He may see and feel that they were not wise statements. He has much shame, much trouble about his ministry. It would not be profitable for you if I were to tell you some of my own matters in regard of this pulpit and of your precious souls. God knows the labour and the anguish and the weakness and the incapacity and the unfitness to speak the word of God to you.

"Whose faith follow". The doctrine of faith; follow that. What they preached, what you received; follow that. It is not a dead word that they preach, a living gospel, and follow it. Regard it as the word of God and not the word of man working effectually in you who believe. A great thing it is to have that preached to you which, commended to your conscience, makes you feel, that is what I want to know; that is what I would ever be after. The gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The Apostle Paul, you remember, in another Epistle speaks of the god of this world blinding the mind of them which believe not. But to us, he said, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now if the minister preaches that gospel the Holy Ghost here says by Paul to the people who hear him, follow his faith. That is not pinning your faith to any man; it is a believing the gospel and desiring to follow it, to follow it in the sense that Paul speaks to the Colossians, increasing in the knowledge of God. "Grow in grace" says Peter "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And when you find that there is preached in your hearing the glorious gospel of Christ, then follow it. Look into it and obey it, and this is obeying them that have the rule over you; considering, narrowly examining, the end of their conversation, the tendency, the direction of their preaching. Consider that; do not just hear a sermon and then go away and forget it. Rather examine it; what was it? what was the content of it? Did it make you hunger for the things preached? Did it bring some news of God to you? Did it create hunger in you for more? The tendency then of that, the effect of that, would be to follow on. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." This is the end of their conversation; not finishing, but the

tendency and the result, the ultimate result of their preaching, namely Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is the gospel. Every true minister will, under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, from time to time so preach as that some of the hearers will perceive that the intention, direction, and effect of the preaching, is to set forth that Person here mentioned, Jesus Christ, and the amazing statement concerning Him: "The same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

"The same yesterday". He spoke in Exodus to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM". He said the same word by John in His gospel: "Before Abraham was I AM." This is Jesus Christ and one observation I would make at once is this, that the glorified humanity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is never to cease. That He will be eternally; since His incarnation, death, ascension into heaven, He will be ever that glorious Man Jesus Christ. And when the kingdom of grace, the work of grace, the effect of grace, the accomplishment of the purpose of God in the Church shall be accomplished and the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, the Man Christ Jesus will still be there. The Head of men elected, the Head and chosen Head of all His people. Their life, their holiness, their justification, and every good thing required for eternity, He possesses and will give out of to them in everlasting, glorious effulgencies, manifestations. He is the same in eternity as He was in eternity past in the purpose of God. Jesus Christ. I am not worthy to speak of Him. That is no feigned word of mine; I know it. I am not worthy to mention Him; No, not worthy to think of Him. But He has chosen men, sinful men, to preach Him, and if I am one of those men, then not only my duty, but my delight, should be, and is I believe at times, to preach this Person. No preaching will ever adequately set forth the glory of the Man Christ Jesus, the God-Man, but I will try a little this evening to speak of Him.

First, as the elect of God. "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth." That word respects the Son of God incarnate; the Son of God equal with His Father; the Son of God incarnate, the servant of His Father. Behold Him. Ah when you are led into the sanctuary, you will see Him now and again flourishing Himself, looking through the lattices, the ordinances of the gospel and flourishing Himself there, as if He should be saying to a mourning

sinner, Behold Me. Behold Me in your stead; behold My sufficiency to save you; behold My power to deliver you from sin. Behold My grace to be sufficient for you in your conflicts and your troubles. Behold My wisdom to guide you through the intricacies and difficulties and perplexities of your lives. What a sight. They said of old to some: "We would see Jesus". If, regarding Him as being in heaven the same Man who lived on earth, and went about doing good; if it were put to you, would you like to see Him, what would your heart say? Paul says: "We see Jesus" - in this Epistle - "We see Jesus" - Exalted? No, not then - "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death". See Him put there by His Father; what a sight for a mourning sinner, for a hard-hearted sinner, for a carnally minded sinner, for an unbelieving sinner, for a distant sinner, a blind sinner, a sinner with soul diseases; what a sight. "We see Jesus". Well if you see Jesus you will run to Him. You could not keep away from Him if you got a sight of Him as made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. Why should He die? What made it necessary that this glorious God-Man should die? The imputation to Him of the sin of His people. The redemption of the men His Father gave to Him. The making of these men complete. Completely lost in themselves, He was sent to make them complete in the sight of God, complete according to the requirements of justice, complete according to the claims of holiness, complete so as to be fit for heaven, for the presence of the holy, glorious God. Some of you may be saying, but surely that never can be as far as we are concerned. Why not? What was Paul when he was Saul of Tarsus? An injurious person, a man who went about persecuting the saints, hailing them to prison, and endeavouring to make them blaspheme the Name of Jesus. He became an eminent saint, and that is a wonderful word concerning himself that he writes to Timothy. He said, I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief, that in me He might show a pattern of His goodness, of His grace, of His power, of His love. You may compete with living sinners, and contend with them that you are the greatest sinner, but do not compete with Paul; he is a pattern; to destroy the pattern is not good. Jesus Christ. His death was necessary. Did the holy and the just Lord Jesus willingly die? Yes, He did; He died willingly, He died lovingly, He died vicariously. He stood in the place of men who ought to die and He died in their place so that they ought not to die and cannot die. "I give unto My sheep eternal life". The same yesterday

in the purpose of God. The same yesterday in the past eternity of electing Him to be the Surety of His people, the Prophet to His people, the King over His people. A great work God gave Him to do. Dear friends, God is infinite, and we cannot rise to that: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11 v 7/8). But God condescended to reveal Himself. Self-revelation of God was necessary if any creature was to see and know Him. Now He has done that in Christ. And Christ the same yesterday in the eternal purpose of God was sent for this purpose to be a prophet to teach and to reveal His Father to poor sinners and so He said, I have come to preach Thy Name in the great congregation. Has He preached to us? That is to say, have any of those blessed statements in the Word of God been given to us, made spirit and life in our hearts? Then we owe that to Jesus Christ. When He speaks we hear. What He speaks we believe. When He speaks to us of our sins we believe. When He shows us that we are ready for hell according to our nature and our practice, we believe it. There is a conviction in God's people, living conviction, that they deserve hell. There is not a man of God on the earth who does not believe that. There is not a member of any church of God in the world that does not believe he deserves hell. O but Christ came and He said, this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone that seeth the Son and believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day. Come, poor sinner, lift up your face to this blessed Jesus who thus speaks. What is it to believe in Him but to believe He is what He says He is, and that great word in Romans is very beautiful for us if we believe it: "If with our mouth we confess that Jesus is the Lord and with our heart believe that God raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved." It is a great word. An honest confession with your mouth and humbly and honestly believing in your heart that He is that Man who died and whom God raised from the dead, you shall be saved. This is the preaching and the great tendency and end and result of preaching: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today." The present time; sinners in this congregation, sensible sinners who sincerely confess on their knees, secretly confess that they are worthless wretches, deserving endless banishment, and yet with a little faith in their hearts cleaving to Him. "And today"; He is what He was when He saved Noah, Enoch, Abel,

Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; when He saved David; when He restored Peter. He is the same today. O poor sinner, the Lord open your eyes to see the greatness of Christ here today. A full Christ for an empty sinner; A mighty Christ for a feeble soul; A loving Christ for a God-hating sinner. Why this is the most humbling truth when brought home by the Holy Spirit to a soul.

And then this Lord Jesus is the same today in His invitation. "Come unto Me" is one of His most wonderful words. "Come unto Me." Chorazin, Bethsaida - of the cities that heard His teaching - were to perish, but He thanks God for discriminating grace and says, looking at poor people - "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden". That does not belong to the beginning only; it continues. Burdened we are, troubled we are, afflicted we are. He says, Come to Me. O but I am not fit. Who told you that? It is true. Has God made you believe it? I am not worthy; that is true. Has God made you feel it? I am empty; that is true. You never take a full vessel to the tap. He brings empty people, emptied from vessel to vessel, emptied of goodness, their own goodness, and all their religion. I say that does not belong to the beginning only. I am an old man now and yet I never was more needy, never more empty than now. I never needed Christ more than I do now, and that is a beautiful invitation to me. "Come unto Me." I have got tired of getting into myself and you will be tired of it - if not now, you soon will be - who believe. O but when He comes and says, empty sinner, Come to Me; troubled sinner, Come to Me; afflicted sinner, Come to Me, "and I will give you rest", the rest of My love. You shall rest in that in which I am resting; My love. Rest in the atonement; and you feel that you can die on that. Seek this blessing. Jesus Christ the same today. The same in His Person, the same in the efficacy of His atonement. the same in His glorious righteousness, the same in His holiness; righteousness and holiness to be given freely. When you get justification you will want sanctification, and these two are like horses in Pharoah's chariot. Sanctification and justification run wonderfully well together. You will know that one day if you do not know it now, poor, tried child of God. The same today. Meeting every case, every church, every troubled soul. A full Christ to meet all felt needs.

"And for ever". You will never wear Him out. You will never tire

His patience out. No, whatever you need, as long as you have needs, He is living for them. As long as you feel you have souls to be saved, He is living to save them. As long as you are disposed to sin, He is the mighty Saviour to redeem you. As long as you are troubled with indwelling sin, He is that mighty One, who says: "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." One says, but I am so singularly hard-hearted. If you were a thousand times harder in your heart, a touch of His goodness will melt it. You will be like wax in the flame; melt. A touch of His goodness, O who can express it properly. "For ever"; that goes beyond time. But look at it for our time. "Because I live ye shall live also". While you are living on the earth, Christ lives for you. While you are living in trouble, Christ lives for you. While you are living in temptation, Christ lives to deliver you. Ever, ever, ever the Saviour. Erskine writes

What thou findest Him at thy best
He's at thy worst the same
And in His love will ever rest

Surely that is a blessed truth. The Lord, it is written, will rest in His love, and there He brings His people to rest. They rest in Him; they rest in His love. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, in His Person, and today and for ever. The same in His love yesterday and today and for ever. The same in His purpose, in His promise, in His goodness, in His faithfulness, the same yesterday and today and for ever. Does this suit you? Does this meet a case? If so, bless God for it. Men shall be blessed in Him. Men here are to be b lessed in Him, and when He blesses who can curse. If the Pope curses you it is a blessing. If Christ blesses you, you are blessed eternally. He said, I appoint unto you a kingdom and that kingdom shall never be destroyed. It is to be for ever and ever. Now I leave it; I am not strong today. I felt more fit to remain at home than to come to the service this evening, but here I am and I have spoken a little to you and may the Lord if it please Him make some use of it for your edification and for the glory of His great and holy Name.

AMEN.