

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 1 August 1920

HEBREWS 13 V 8

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever"

This text is a reason why a preceding exhortation should be observed. The exhortation is - "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", their ministry, their life among you. It has, therefore, in the first place reference to a stated ministry which the people having it are exhorted to regard, to obey. "Obey" in another place the word is, "them that have the rule over you". It cannot apply to an occasional minister who visits and goes away, but to the Pastor who rules, and rules not by any arbitrary authority taken to himself, but by the efficacy of the Word of God in the consciences of the people. Remember them, that they are poor men of like passions with yourselves, but remember them as being ordained of God and sent by Him to preach the everlasting gospel. Remember that they speak to you the Word of God, and do not forget, those of you who have found it to be the Word of God in power and authority, follow their faith, the doctrine of faith. Their grace of faith is for their own profit and for your profit, but in many cases, it may so fail in exercise as that you would hardly be exhorted to follow it, but follow their teaching, the doctrine of faith as they deliver it to you. Remember the gospel which they preach, that faith which, as Jude says, was delivered once for all unto the saints. Remember that, follow that. Any teaching that has not for its Alpha and Omega the Person and work of Christ, reject. But the teaching that has for its Alpha and Omega the Person and work of Christ, follow.

This is the exhortation, considering the end of their conversation. Consider, if a Pastor should sometimes have to wield a two edged sword to cut and wound; if, as an husbandman, he should sometimes have put into his hand by the Master, a pruning knife, to cut off some luxurious growth; if he should have, at the first to

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discover sin and speak things which may make your conscience wince; consider that such is not the end that God has in view and that the minister has in view in so preaching. He has an end before him and these are means to that end, the end, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the end; consider it. Do not judge of a ministry by one sermon. Consider the end of the ministry. This, as I understand, is the exhortation that the Apostle here gives and he gives the grand reason for it in the text, that a true ministry has for its great object, in seeking the good of the people, the Person of Christ. And this is according to Paul's own declaration concerning himself and his aim and determination in preaching among the Corinthians. "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." That was his one great subject. And you cannot read the Scriptures with any care, without perceiving that this Person, the Lord Jesus, fills the whole of the Scripture. Like the sun shining in his strength in the heavens fills the heavens, rules the whole of the day, and makes the day, and fills the earth with his warmth and light and life, so the Lord Jesus fills the firmament of the Scripture and the earth, the church of the living God, and there is none beside Him, none worthy. None worthy in heaven, but Christ; none worthy in the church, but Christ; none to be set up and have prominence, but Christ, who, in God's and in the Spirit's teaching, is All and in All. It will be well for us to examine ourselves and ask ourselves this question - What place has Christ in our religion? And I will give to you an answer to the question. The place He has in your religion will be in exact proportion to the knowledge and experience you have of your sinfulness. Christ becomes sinners, that is He is fitting to sinners. Such an High Priest became us, is suitable to us, becomes us, and there is a singular beauty in the fitness of things. As the key is suitable to the lock, so there is a fitness in Christ to the cases of His children. So what I have, as the Lord may help me, to speak of this morning is this Person, who has the pre-eminence in all things, the Lord Jesus Christ, the end of a true ministry.

And first of all, consider this that in Him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. What therefore but emptiness can you find in yourselves, as apart from Him considered? What can you find, however diligently you may search into your own hearts, but sin and folly and death. But God would not have His Church live, or rather

die, in such a case and state, nor would He trust her with the wealth, but He gave it to another, even to His beloved Son. "It pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell". Are you to have eternal life? He gave it to Christ. Are you to be clothed with everlasting righteousness? Christ is the Lord our righteousness. Are you to be brought near to God? Then you must find, and you will find, that He is the Way. Are you to be animated by the Spirit? He has the fulness of the Spirit. Everything necessary for godliness on earth, for justification in the conscience, for the acceptance of a sinner, for the sanctification to the glory of God of the church, for her honourable passage through a turbulent state, a state of trouble, distress, sinfulness and danger. She must look to the Lord Jesus for her presentation to the Father in glory. She will be presented to Him for He shall say - Here am I and the children which Thou hast given Me. O my brethren, you will always be poor in self but rich in Him. Always empty in self, but there is a fulness in Him to which fulness the Spirit will direct you. There is none but Jesus, none but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good. What a great end this is in a ministry; a full Christ for an empty sinner; a suitable Saviour where a suitable sinner can be found. He looked upon men, God did, to see if there were any that did understand and He found none. And again, "He looketh upon men and if there be any that say I have sinned....." What a solemn thing that, as it were, God must make a search among the multitudes of men to find a confessing man. How many confessing men would He find in this chapel this morning? "If there be any that say I have sinned and perverted that which was right and it profited me not, then is He gracious unto him". And He will say, deliver him from the pit, deliver him from going into the pit, for I have found a ransom. I have found a sinner and I have found a Saviour for him. I have found a confessing man and I have found a fountain of precious merit, whereby all his sinfulness shall be cleansed from him. O mourner, your tears are to be dried. A full Christ will bring His gospel to dry your tears. He will do it from time to time here and throughout eternity. God shall wipe all tears from the eyes of that great multitude that no man can number. "Christ is the Friend of sinners, be that forgotten never".

Consider this in Him that He abideth a Priest continually. His Priestly office will continue as long as there is a sinner to

intercede for. Then shall He deliver up the kingdom to His Father. But until He has accomplished the number of His elect, and brought His children home, He will exercise on their behalf His Priestly office. He has exercised it in the Church. In the wilderness He exercised it, for Christ was with the Church in the wilderness. O what a presence is the presence of Christ. You may go back in your thoughts to eternity and if you are led by the Spirit you will see by precious faith that God always had a man before Him in His every purpose. When there was not a righteous man on the earth after the fall, there was a righteous Man in heaven in the purpose of Almighty God, and when the Lord gathered Israel and separated Israel from all the nations round about him, then He would have this Man there in type and shadow, and many visits did the Lord pay to men on the earth. And this Priesthood of His, He was called to, for God His Father called Him to this; He took not on this honour of Himself, but He who called Him said "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec". And, says Paul, such a High Priest became us; He is fitting to us. Since under the old dispensation no sinner could approach God without the intervention of the priest and of a sacrifice, so God taught this, that this High Priest, Jesus Christ, a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, ever lives to make intercession for His people. He began to make intercession for them when He entered on His public ministry and all that He did while here below was the work of a Priest. And especially on the cross He was a Priest offering Himself unto God, not only passively suffering, but actively offering, offering Himself without spot; in all the spotlessness of His nature and all the spotlessness of His life, all the spotlessness of Himself, as a sacrifice. He offered Himself thus unto God. Yes, and whenever you look to God by faith, Christ will be the medium. He will be the Priest by whom you make your approach to God, and whenever God will communicate mercy to you it will be through the Priest blessings will come down, for the Oracle will be there, and you will see and will hear the Lord speaking to you. As says Paul in the beginning of this Epistle "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things." And that is in connection with His Priesthood, for, says he in the same chapter, and I think the following verses, that after He had put away sin, put away all the sin of His children, "He sat down on the

right-hand of the Majesty on high". My friends, you will never get on without a Priest. You will never have success in your religion and never take a good step towards heaven, never know the peace of God in your conscience, without a Priest. Let the Papists have their priests, be this one High Priest ours, our great High Priest. His passion, His death shall be our life, and our access to the Father. Our only acceptance with the Father, our only cleansing from the defilement of sin, our only purging from the guilt of sin, our only perfection, shall be in His precious, all sufficient, vicarious sacrifice of Himself. Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, the same yesterday. Go back and see His eternal Deity and go back and see His election by the Father to be a Man - "Behold Mine Elect". And see Him set up from eternity and set up in the Church in the wilderness by the Priesthood in the Levitical tribe. See all that to set out one Man, the Man Christ Jesus. I am disposed to say this to you, that I believe the Lord will make the Manhood of Jesus Christ increasingly precious to His children, for how can a poor, sinful creature, approach the Almighty God, apart from a Man. The Man Christ Jesus is true Almighty God, for His human nature is united to His divine Person. O the admirable wisdom of God in this, the goodness of God in this, the love of God in this, that there is One between a poor sinner and His infinite majesty, too glorious for creatures to behold in its nakedness. Why the holiness of God, that perfection of Deity, would strike the whole world of men into eternal nothingness, apart from the Man Christ Jesus. As I get older the human nature of Christ is more and more to me. I love that word of Paul's - the Man Christ Jesus. That blessed Man, that efficacious Priest, that great High Priest, who holds Himself before His children and lets them sometimes hold Him in the galleries, that they may look on Him as their Priest and look on His sacrifice as their life, as being in their stead - Jesus Christ. My friends, it is a very great question then for us to ask ourselves, not only whether we perceive Him to be suitable for sinners, but whether we are suitable to Him and for Him. Whether we can enter into the language of the Psalmist - "Pardon mine iniquity". Whether we can use words which are more true than polite today, as men speak - "My wounds stink and are corrupt and there is no soundness in my flesh". Whether, seeing and feeling ourselves to be in such a sad condition, we get by occasions, sweet occasions, a view by faith of this Priest, this High Priest, Jesus Christ. You will of course know

that the whole of this epistle to the Hebrews is written for this great purpose to exalt the Priesthood of Christ above all the priests who were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this Man, because He continueth ever hath an unchangeable Priesthood, an unchangeable Priesthood, and therefore He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. O it were a well spent life, a life spent in a believing view of the Priest, Jesus Christ. To see how acceptable He is to God in the first place. It would not have answered at all for Levi to have thrust himself into the office of the priest. And when the matter was disputed, you remember, because of a company that rose up against Aaron and Moses and said that they took too much on themselves, God settled it; God settled it. The rod of Aaron swallowed up all other rods. God had appointed Aaron and all who came from him to be priests. And now, what of Christ? May not He take on Himself the office? He is Almighty God and He has human nature without sin attached to Him, united to Him, indissolubly united. May He not do it? No. He exalted Himself not to this, but He that called Him to it said "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." How acceptable then is this Priest to God who called Him to be a Priest and may I ask the question at this point - since Christ is so infinitely acceptable to His Father, in this, His office as Priest, has He been made acceptable to us? Is He acceptable to my heart? Am I wicked enough to need Him? Do I realise sufficiently the desperate condition, the separation from God, my sin has brought? And do I believe that I cannot, that I may not, approach God in my own name? And has it ever been manifested to me that there is a Name above every name, the Name of Jesus who shall save His people from their sins. In that Name I may go to God. Is Christ acceptable?

And consider in the next place the sufficiency of His offering contrasted with the insufficiency of the perpetually repeated offerings of the Levitical dispensation. Says Paul - If these offerings could have taken away sin, the conscience would then have been perfected. There would have been no more conscience of sins. But there is a remembrance again made of sin every year on the annual day of atonement. These offerings were, by their very repetition, declared to be insufficient, and the conscience declared them to be insufficient, for they never purged sin from it. But this Man came,

the Lord Jesus, and by one offering He perfected for ever them that are sanctified by it, and the application of His blood to the conscience takes away sin, purges it. And God says of all sin, thus purged, I have cast thy sin behind My back into the depths of the sea. And when you get that forgiveness dropped into your conscience, then you understand a little of the greatness and the efficacy of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And consider how this vicarious sacrifice not only satisfied God, but that the satisfaction of God in it was manifested by the resurrection of Christ. So He is the same today, for He was declared to be the Son of God with power in His resurrection by the Spirit of holiness. Yes, sinner, He is today what He ever was. The resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the scheme of salvation. It is the keystone to the arch. It is the declaration by God Himself that the sacrifice of Christ did the great work it was intended to do, that, by dying, Christ did put away sin. He so put it away that it shall never rise again, never appear again, against those on whose behalf this great High Priest sacrificed unto God. And, says the Apostle, "such a High Priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens", and now "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Jesus Christ, the same for ever. If His Priesthood is unchangeable, if His sacrifice was sufficient, did put away sin, why then, here is a ground for hope all through the failings and fallings and sins and sinning of poor, mourning sinners. Prodigals restored, an adulterous David forgiven, a blaspheming Peter forgiven, and people brought to find sins in the past, sins in the present, and sins to come, all sacrificed for, put away by the great High Priest. And then, says one who is ignorant of the whole case, then you may do as you like and sin as you like. Every man who says that declares by saying it that he knows nothing at all about it, because whenever God forgives sins, that act of forgiveness attaches the sinners to Himself and proves a double cure as Toplady so beautifully puts it in his prayer

Be of sin the double cure

Cleanse me from its guilt and power

Nothing will crucify the love of sin so much as the blood of Christ on

the conscience. Nothing will make you so loyal to God and so desirous of living a good life before God and man, as an assurance that sin shall never hurt you. O what a gospel is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! Paul declares it to be after godliness, that is productive of godliness. John does the same in his epistle - "My little children these things I write unto you that ye sin not". The tendency of every truth of God, all divine truth, is, as brought home, this way - it turns your back on sin; it turns your heart to God. Jesus Christ, in His priestly office, the same yesterday and today; meeting a present case, and for ever meeting all cases to come. A glorious Person, a glorious work, a glorious theme, as all the saints are brought to know.

I might say, Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever, in His love. "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end." "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". Love is in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. Love runs through all. Love is in all God's dealings with His children. It has to do with regeneration. "Thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee". When thou wast dead, when thou wast polluted, when thou wast a loathsome person, then I spread my skirt over thee and thy time was the time of love. And I passed by thee and I said unto thee 'Live'. Love did it. All the trouble that follows is part of God's purpose, but the beginning of it was from love and the rest is by love. Conviction is because the Lord loves the person He convinces of sin. Trouble is sent by love. Mourning is occasioned because the love of God will have a mourner comforted by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the very expression, the highest possible manifestation of the love of God. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". O my friends, love is a warming thing; you know it. Family love is a warm love and the best love. And so, in the church, the love of God is a warm love and a warming love. It flows through Jesus Christ. It is in His every look, His every word, His every touch, His dealings, His leadings, His mercies. Why, He gave the proof of it, higher than all other proofs, when He died. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends". Does He speak to you? You say, if He does it is in a rebuke. Well, what does He say about that? He has something to say about it, and this is it - "As many as I love I

rebuke and chasten." And you will live to find that "faithful are the wounds of a friend". No deceitful kiss will He ever give, but a faithful reproof He administers, and He is always the same. Always one glorious, unextinguishable, unchangeable, eternal love of a sinner. The love of Christ has height and depth and length and breadth, unfathomable and yet knowable for Paul prays that the Ephesians might "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge". May not this alter it? Nothing shall alter it. O, but my sins. He knew all of them. "For I knew thee that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb". Nevertheless for My own sake will I do it. I will chasten you betimes, but I will restore you. I sent the caterpillar and the palmerworm and the cankerworm and the locust, and they barked your tree. But I, out of my love, will restore you the years that these creatures damaged you. They bark you; your fig tree was laid bare. But I will restore unto you all that they have taken away. Love brought Job into the deep, but love gave him twice as much as the enemies of Job took away. O my friends, love will restore; love does restore. Love is double love then. A converting mercy is wondrous mercy, and when the conversion is repeated it is still more wondrous. Love comes and speaks kindly and looks and smiles and embraces and caresses and comforts. The same always; the same in a promise, the same in a precept, the same in all solemn dealings. The same in untoward providences, things that frown, things that threaten, things that weaken, things that empty. These shall all show the love of God and make room for manifestations of it. Are you afflicted? Well, you will find the love of God in the affliction. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction". Do you desire to be sanctified to the glory of God? He says I have purified thee in the furnace. You do not like the furnace but you will bless God for putting you into it one day and prove that He loved you; that He loved you enough to do it. It is great to be loved enough by God to move Him to afflict you and correct you and to bring you into affliction as it is written - "Thou laidest affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place". You did not think of the wealth when you fretted perhaps. Who would have thought that the vineyard would be given in the wilderness. "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness". And then what? "I will give her her

vineyards from thence.....: and she shall sing there",
the place in which she howled, the place in which she thought she
should be lost and die there. In that place she shall get her
vineyard and there she shall sing, and so it will still be and it all
proceeds from love. Jesus Christ who is love, and shows love and
speaks love, does all this and He is the same yesterday and today and
for ever. May we live to prove Him this.

AMEN.