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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 3 July 1931

HEBREWS 2 V 1

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed
to the things which we have heard,
lest at any time we should let them slip"

There is an important distinction to be made between the eternal, purposes of God, purposes which nothing can frustrate, a will that none can resist, purposes expressed in the Scripture by and in the doctrines of grace; the eternal election of particular people, their redemption by Jesus Christ, their perfect sanctification by His one offering, the death of Christ, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven; all the doctrines that hang on His Person; these are not to be confused with any of God's methods. The distinction between divine purposes and divine methods is very clear, as I judge, in Holy Scripture. God said "I will be their God and they shall be My people" That is the beginning and the end so far, that people thus spoken of must get to heaven. Neither men, means nor devils shall ever imperil the salvation of one of those greatly favoured people. That is the purpose. The methods of God for the accomplishment of His purpose expressed in invitations, warnings, exhortations and threatenings and expressions of danger, these set forth God's methods. Nothing could break His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that they should inherit the land of promise. They must inherit it for it was given to them in a covenant but they must go into Egypt. They must encounter trouble, they must come into the wilderness and meet with difficulties and dangers and deaths and the way of God in His method to bring His people to the land of promise had in it many very solemn perplexities to the people. They must find again and again their dependence and their dependence provoked their nature. Hunger pained them and they rebelled. Thirst threatened to consume them and they complained and for their rebellion and their complaining God said that that generation should not enter into the land of promise. Here were methods punishing the wicked, preserving the promise, keeping it according to His own way and His own mind, and I make this,

preliminary remark because of the connection there is between method and purposes in the first chapter of this Epistle and the first verse of the second chapter. We ought, says the Apostle, to give the more earnest, fervent attention to the things which we have heard lest at any time we, who have heard them, should let them slip. Where is the danger? says one. If the people are redeemed, where is the danger? No danger with respect to embracing and receiving the atonement made by the Person of the Son of God, but to the conscience, to the stability of the people who have heard these things. And their readiness to let them slip and to suffer from inattention, these things are, as I judge, clearly expressed in this important verse, this exhortation. We ought, whatever we may judge as to our state, whatever we may think respecting the Word of God, whatever we may judge respecting what we hope He has said to us making us certain at times that we are His and that we should reach heaven, we ought to diligently, carefully, seriously, and prayerfully give heed to the things which we have heard in Holy Scripture and, as we hope, some of us, have heard in our hearts, to take very close heed to those things. Christ in various places spoke of heed. Take heed what ye hear. Take heed how ye hear. Take heed lest you should be drunken and surfeited with care. Take heed lest you should have in you an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God. Take heed to your way. Look narrowly to it. Watch and be sober. Put on the whole armour of God that you may withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.

Now if I have been enabled to make this point clear to you, it may lead us to some proper observations from this important text. "Therefore" that is, relating to what has gone before, what has been said in this first chapter particularly. Take heed lest, having heard it, you should be inattentive to it and it should slip away from you as a leaking vessel.

Now I would draw your attention to what has been spoken, the whole of the first chapter. This chapter brings before us God in His condescension, condescending to speak in time past in divers manners unto the fathers by the prophets. He would make known His mind, He made it known. He gave them good laws. He gave them manna for their hunger and water for their thirst and His good Spirit to lead them, and

all this was His kindness to them. But all that dispensation was preparatory and typical, preparatory for the coming of the promised seed, typical of Him who is the promised seed. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" - the Old Testament, full of all that that is comprised in this one verse - "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son", His only begotten Son, of the same substance with Himself and the Holy Spirit; the subsistence of three persons in one God. Good it is to be settled on that point. Unitarianism is not known in Holy Scripture. There were Sadducees in the Lord's day, who said there was no Spirit and no resurrection, but they were in great heresy, and there are many heretics today. But this is the point first of all that God in these last days hath spoken unto us by His Son. But how? His Son is in His bosom. His Son is God, as the Father is God, as the Holy Ghost is God. This God hath no man seen nor can see for He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto. How then has God spoken by His Son? By sending Him into this world that we might live through Him. By His, the Son's, assumption of our nature, taking it into union never to be dissolved, with His divine Person, and when He was baptised His Father said "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". And when He was transfigured in the presence of the three favoured disciples, the Father said "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him". And what did He say by the Son? He said by the Son He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life". "He that believeth on the Son shall not come into condemnation". He has said by the Son that the Son purged our sins by Himself and what does that mean but that the Son perfected for ever, by death, them that are sanctified by the Father. Sanctified by the Father in their election and sanctified by the Son in redeeming them, purging their sins from them. This Son is the heir of all things; and how did He become the heir of all things? He was the Maker of all things, the God of all things. How could He become the heir of them? By the gift of them to Him as the Redeemer. "Ask of Me and I shall give thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession". (Psalm 2 v 8) And so this gift of all things to Christ constitutes Him the heir of all things. And if we be part of that inheritance in the covenant of grace we are part of Christ's inheritance, and that will bring this difference in our

experience. Each one of us will be led to say, out of feeling - "The Lord is My portion". Jacob was the lot of God's inheritance and God was the lot of Jacob's inheritance. "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him."

The death of Christ is brought before us here. "Who, being the brightness of His glory". Not to be seen in its nakedness - more terrible than the terrible crystal is this glory unveiled - but veiled in Christ, who is the brightness of it and the express or impressed image of His Person. What God is, Christ represents and makes known. Think of it. All that God is, His Son incarnate makes known. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also". Philip did not know it at the moment, but the Lord Jesus told him. "He that hath seen Me" (I am sent by My Father) "hath seen My Father also". "And upholding all things by the Word of His power". That glorious Man at the right hand of God upholds this world, upholds the universe, upholds heaven and all holy angels there. Upholds hell and all the devils there in everlasting chains of darkness, and upholds the world, all men, wicked nations, infidel nations, heathen nations and a so called Christian England. By the word of His power all things are kept, kept in their order, kept to their destined end. What a Christ He is. And does He hold you up? He holds your being whether you know it or not. He holds your health or your sickness. He holds your wealth or your poverty. He orders all things. What a favour to believe it. What a favour to believe it. Think of it. Here is trouble in the family. How did it come? "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" Here is sickness seizes a person whose health and whose labour may seem necessary. Who sends it? Who keeps that sickness there for the time? There is prosperity sent to one and it may be a terrible snare to him. Here is adversity sent to another and it is turned into a blessing and the whole of it is in the hands of the dear Redeemer. Do you believe it? The Scripture says it, nothing will undo it. The Scripture affirms it and God's Word is settled for ever in heaven. Now this Person of Jesus Christ and His work are the themes of the Scripture. His Person and His work the Father preached in Eden. "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head", said God to the serpent, "and thou shalt bruise His heel". And from that word onward throughout the whole of the Scripture, the main themes are the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. He is to be

worshipped. The angels are to worship Him. "And let all the angels of God worship Him". (Hebrews 1 v 6) Are sinners to worship Him? Yes. God hath given Him a Name which is above every Name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess. Even His enemies shall come and bow before Him and lie in a feigned submission to Him, but His people come and worship Him. They worship that glorious God manifested in our own nature. I have said, and I will repeat it this morning, worship may be truly said to include the whole of saving religion. If you worship in spirit and in truth you are right, you are upright, you are consistent, you are godly. Imperfect indeed by nature, lost and filthy. "Let all the angels of God worship Him". He is worthy of it. They worship Him in heaven. They take up the wondrous chorus after the saints have sung the hymn and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands and thousands of angels say: Worthy is the Lamb. (Revelation 5 v 11). How many of us have worshipped Him in spirit and in truth, have gone to the throne of grace sensibly lost, polluted, weak, helpless? How many have worshipped Him feeling the weakness of their nature and their readiness to fall and to slip and to do wrong, and have said: Hold Thou us up and we shall be safe? We must honour the Son if we be the Lord's people, even as we honour the Father. In this first chapter He is spoken to by His Father as the creator of heaven and earth: "And Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest". A wonderful word. More than 30 years ago it was made spirit and life to me in a sore affliction. "Thou remainest". Suppose God takes your health away, suppose He bereaves you of a dear one, suppose you have nearly nothing left of what you once possessed. Nature says, I cannot bear it. Faith says, God remains. That is enough for faith. It is enough for faith. If you have vital faith the Spirit of God will stir that up occasionally and in trouble particularly and enable you to say: I have enough, because I have God. You may say, some have said, to Him, I need no creature. We have all that we want if we have the Lord Jesus.

Another subject, subordinate but still important, on which I shall not enter at all, is the doctrine of the ministration of angels. The Scripture declares it. They are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

And now we reach the text: "Therefore" seeing that God has revealed such things, spoken so wondrously, so gloriously of His Son, and called upon the angels to worship Him, and told us distinctly that this incarnate Son did die and by dying purged our sins, and by rising is set down at the right-hand of the majesty on high, "therefore" we should diligently attend to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip.

There are two ways of hearing. The first is that of which all men are capable, the hearing of the Word, the external Word of God. Time was when England was a Bible reading nation and no-one can take a glance of those days and not see how God blessed the nation as it clave to and valued His Word. Today it is different, very different. Religious teachers have trampled the Word of God under their feet and taught the nation to do the same and woe be to the teachers who have denied the perfect inspiration of the Scriptures. The result of the teaching of these false prophets in our day is that the nation has become less moral, less intelligent in many respects. It has turned its back on God. It is devoted to pleasure. The numbers attending in places of worship comparatively are not quite negligible but nearly so. And the whole of it, in my mind, is the neglect of the Scripture, the denial of the inspiration of the Word of God, the trampling of it under foot. I said to a modernist minister some years ago in conversation, after he had advanced his errors, if I believed what you say I should throw my Bible away, I should have no use for it. You say this is not inspired and that is not inspired; tell me what is. Prove to me what is. Casting doubts on the inspiration of the Word of God is an awful sin. Now you dear young people listen to me. If ever you meet with people who deny the perfect inspiration of the Word of God, have nothing to do with them. They may be respectable, moral, in many ways amiable and delightful, but have nothing to do with them because they are enemies to your immortal souls, they are enemies to the eternal God. Cleave to the Scriptures, cleave to the inerrant Word of God. What this Book says is true, God says it, and it would be good for the nation if it turned again to the Word of God. I said the other week in this pulpit, and I repeat it, that I hope there never will be in this chapel a congregation that denies the inspiration of the Bible. If ever it comes to pass the glory will have departed. You

who will remain after I am taken away, God help you to cleave close to His Word. You will have no map to show you the way if this Book is denied. You will have no signs of Christianity, that is of true saving religion, if this Book is taken away as to its inspiration. You will have nothing worth living for. You will only live for yourselves and then you will die and sink into eternal misery and punishment.

There is another way of hearing and that is the hearing of faith, the hearing that faith begets in the soul, that hearing that expresses itself thus: "Speak Lord for Thy servant heareth". That spirit that says: "Be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit". That spirit that listens, that hears the rod, that hears the truth, that hears Christ, that hears the atonement, that hears the love of God. And this hearing I would take a little notice of.

When God sent His Son into the world it was to redeem it. When John baptised, baptised the Lord Jesus, he saw Him and he saw that He was the Christ by the token His Father gave and he said: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world". Some heard it. Two of John's disciples, the next day as they stood with John, saw Jesus passing and John said: "Behold the Lamb of God", and these two followed Christ. When men, sinful men, feeling their sinfulness, their ruin, hear the Word of God respecting the Saviour, faith comes by that hearing, and they just do what those two disciples did. They follow Christ. And if He says to them: "Whom seek ye", they say: "Master where dwellest Thou?" They want to be with Him, they want to be at His footstool. O how sometimes I want to be there, and cannot you say the same? To get near Him, to see His well-pleased face, to hear His gracious word of redemption. This is what every child of God feels after. This is what he hears. The Apostle John in his first epistle says: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him," (1 John 4 v 9) might have a real religion, true experience, real life, a life that shall never end. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish". They hear of righteousness; they have none of their own. Of that they are convinced. But they hear of another righteousness: "This is the Name

wherewith He shall be called: The Lord our Righteousness," and after that they go, by faith. They hear of the atonement. With sin, so filthy a thing, corruption that cannot be washed away, lusts that cannot be overcome, they hear of the atonement that made the vilest wretch on earth spotless. If you are half as wicked as I am you are glad of that sometimes. You wonder at it. Spotless. O but you need faith to believe it when you see your own spots. When you perceive and feel the Ethiopian could as soon change his skin and the leopard his spots as you could wash away that pollution, then to hear of the Redeemer purging by His death all the sins of His people from them that draws. The hope is fixed, the heart is fixed for the time.

Now, says the Holy Ghost by Paul, you should give earnest heed to these things. They are not common, they are not transitory. They do not come as the morning and die away in the evening, the night. They are just eternal things. "Lest at any time we should let them slip". There are weaknesses in us known to every child of God, weaknesses which, felt, make a child of God tremble. I can only say I know what I am saying. Your weaknesses if you see them, if you feel them, will make you tremble. Why, says one, you are in the covenant. Why, says another, God's purposes cannot be altered. True, you say, true, but Peter got a fall, David got a fall. There was a Demas among the disciples who loved this present world. There was a Judas who betrayed the Lord Jesus. And you look within and feel again and again I may be that Demas, I may be that Judas. God forbid it. And you tremble, you are afraid.

Slip; like a leaking vessel not tightly, not perfectly corked. Planks loose admitting the leakage, being the leakage. So says the Scripture, lest you should let these things slip away. Take your memory. You may say sometimes with Medley

My memory bad, but what is sad
Can folly still retain

You hear on the Lord's Day, you feel some attraction, you feel some influence, you read the Scripture. Monday morning comes, business comes, you open your letters, you attend to your business, and where are yesterday's feelings? Where is the influence of yesterday?

Where is the feeling you had in prayer? Well, you say, gone, gone. Where is the doctrine that you felt you loved? It remains here, but as to your heart where is it? What you felt about the Person of Christ, where is the feeling? He is the same yesterday, and today and for ever, but where is the feeling that you felt you had about Him? Where is the trust you felt you could repose in Him? Where is the leaning, that you hoped you felt in your spirit, on His arm, so coming up out of the wilderness? And you say, all gone. You may say with Berridge

Hot and cold in half an hour

Foolish, indolent spiritually, slothful, forgetful, prayerless. This must be done, this letter must be answered, this matter of business must be attended to, this thing in my family must be looked after, and the good things of God, gone. Now the devil may come in and say, you lazy creature, you make a profession, you talk about God when you meet with your friends, but what about your life in secret? No energy in prayer, no point, no case, a poor caseless professor; what will become of you? Do you see any point in this? Take heed. Take heed how you hear. What spirit have you in hearing? Take heed what you hear. Does it touch the case? Does it influence your mind? Does it draw out your affections to the Lord Jesus? Does it make God necessary and precious to you at any time, in any measure? We should take heed to the person who is so prominent in the first chapter and throughout this epistle. Do we really believe what we sometimes sing?

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

Can you honestly say it? Have you said it as before Almighty God? And now you have grown careless and the thing that you believed, in which you hoped, on which hung all your hopes for heaven, gone, as it were, slipped away from you. You have got into such a state that when you read a chapter, you forget at the end of it what it was and go back and read verse by verse; still there is no abiding. The doctrine of Christ's Person, what saith God concerning it? "My doctrine shall drop as the rain and My speech shall distil as the dew". "I will pour

water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed and My blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah 44 verse 3) Now this doctrine of Christ is not only important, but essential. No grace without Him, no purging of sin away without Him. No standing well with God without Him. No righteousness without His righteousness. May the Lord give each believer grace to be diligent in this. Take heed to the doctrine of Christ's Person, God's beloved Son, given, as it were, from His very bosom, sent into the world that His people might live through Him, and we ought to be diligent in this because of the importance of it, because of the value of our own souls, because there is no good but in Him. In Him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. Now I leave it for the moment. Brethren, take heed to what you have heard in Holy Scripture and to what you have heard with the hearing ear by precious faith and may the Lord grant that we may be saved from heedlessness and forgetfulness for His Name's sake.

AMEN.