

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening  
12th December 1926

Text Hebrews 3 verse 1

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

To a spiritual mind it must always be a beautiful thing to see the position, the prominence, the superiority of the Lord Jesus above all others in the Church. He will ever be "the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song of Solomon 5 verse 10. and the "altogether lovely." (Song of Solomon 5 verse 16. There is none like Him. David said when he was told that there was one sword, and that was the sword of Goliath the Philistine of Gath given to him "There is none like that; give it me." (1 Samuel 21 verse 9). So whenever the Holy Ghost manifests the Lord Jesus to a sinner, he says, there is none like Him, none to be compared with Him, among the sons of men.

Faith says of Him, "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips;" (Psalm 45 verse 2). And that is true of every one, possessing faith. And of your esteem of the Holy Ghost, as the conveyor of spiritual life, and some knowledge of the Person of Christ. If He is not all, He is nothing to you. But He is all, He is made all and in all to His people from time to time, but not without changes. There must be some understanding of the word experimental, the renewing of your minds. The mind gets dead, becomes dark, it cannot sustain itself, no saint is sufficient for himself, he must prove that painfully. He must know, and sometimes to his shame, and his grief, that he naturally wanders away and turns his eyes to other objects than Christ. But again and again the Holy Ghost renews the spirit of his mind, then he turns to the Lord, who receives him and communes with him.

We considered this morning a little of these beautiful words which are applied to the people of God, the holy brethren. And that holiness in the scriptures means being set apart for God, by the infusion into their souls of eternal life. Partakers of the heavenly calling, as being made, "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1 verse 4). To answer to these words is indeed a great blessing, and an unspeakable mercy. If you are not partakers of grace, you are not holy people, religious people you may be, but holy you cannot be, without the new birth.

The consideration of which we are called, is a consideration of the Lord Jesus Christ, under two names, first the Apostle and second the High Priest. Consider the Apostle, the Only One sent on a mission, sent to do something, sent to maintain the honour of God. This the Apostle did mightily, when, as testified by the Holy Ghost in the scriptures. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1 verse 18). Where He has been eternally, as the Son of the Father in truth and love. He came willingly, He came lovingly, He came in humility, He humbled Himself. He left His glorious throne, and became a man, a poor man, that poor people might be made rich, through His poverty. (2 Corinthians 8 verse 9).

He came with messages, He brought words, the words which He had heard His Father speak in eternity. He came to speak, He came to do the works which His Father had worked, and He had seen, and now He was commanded to do. And the chief thing that He did, the chief work, that embraced all and gave glory to all, and efficacy to all, was dying. He was commanded to die. You will not die by commandment, you will not die voluntarily, some disease will wear out your life, your heart will stop beating, and you will die. Jesus died a voluntary death, as He told His disciples. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." (John 10 verse 17). The Jews did all they could to take away his life, they crucified the Lord of Glory, and while the two thieves beside Him died in-voluntary deaths, He, Jesus Christ the immutable ever blessed, glorious Son of God, and Son of the virgin, knowing that all things were accomplished by Him, and now in Him, as the curse of God took effect upon Him, He poured out His soul unto death. "He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the Ghost".(John 19 verse 30. And dismissed His Spirit, that was the death of Christ.

Its voluntary nature is necessary to its efficacy, and we have before us this evening to notice, that He is the High Priest of our profession. Whatever we profess, that is right with respect to Him. It has some, more or less immediate and direct reference to our High Priest. A priest is a middle person, a mediator, between parties who have a dispute. One of the two parties, is in the Son of God as Mediator, representing those who are entirely in the wrong. And it is the work of the priest to appease the one who is injured, against whom the other party has revolted. It is His work to offer sacrifices. It was the work of all the priests under the Levitical dispensation to offer sacrifices. "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offerings for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein which are offered by the law." (Hebrews 10 verse 8).

There was no access to God, no reconciliation or communion with Him, but in and through the work of the priest as sacrificing Himself, which is fulfilled in the High Priest of our profession. "Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will O God, He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." (Hebrews 10 verse 9). All the access you ever get, all the hope you ever feel, all the peace that flows into your conscience, the blessed smiles of God upon your souls, the promises of God to you, the gift of the Holy Ghost to you, the honourable way in which you are enabled to live, bringing forth fruit unto the praise and glory of God, all must come, all will, all did come through the High Priest.

We have to notice by the Lord's help, this evening, first of all the plenary office of our High Priest. It is a full priesthood, full of all the pleasure of God, of the authority of God, for God called Him to be a Priest after the order of Melchisadec. There is nothing now that is necessary to the bringing of the people to God, that is not invested in our High Priest. This is that which is so beautiful to faith, to see every necessary thing for salvation, everything to bring righteousness, to put away sin, to perfect the brethren. To make them like God, and to walk with God, He has put all in this blessed Lord Jesus. There is something wonderful to faith, to see that the Father's pleasure dwells in the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." (Colossians 1 verse 19). And also, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2 verse 9). So there is a fulness of priesthood here in that He "is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7 verse 16). "This man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." (Hebrews 7 verse 24). There is no necessity for another priest, Christ has that blessed undying fulness of priesthood, with which the saints have to die. They all know that if there were a flaw here, a real lack of anything, or any kind of emptiness respecting this High Priest, then we should have reason to despair of entering God's presence.

But whatever was required respecting the Person, whatever was required respecting the office, of a priest in the type. The Lord Jesus as the anti-type, with the fulness of His Person, and Priesthood is Perfect. The Lord describes by Moses "And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto Me in the priest's office:" (Exodus 29 verse 1). He must have sacrifices ordained and brought to him continually, the morning and evening Lamb, the peace offerings, the annual atonement, all these were vested in the priest. They belong to his office and the people.

The people of God could only have access to Him, only have success in their life, and only have victory over their enemies through this means. With constant absolvment of their sins, by the annual day of atonement to God, with respect to this great office. All of this is fulfilled, and realised in the Lord Jesus Christ, "Consider this," and consider what you owed, if He were not what He is, as a Great high Priest. How could you pay? Every believer knows in himself, by the teaching of the Spirit, that the only possible way of having peace with God, a pure conscience, a humble mind, a suppled will, and a godly walk, must be in and through this Person, the High Priest of his profession.

Consider in the next place the power of this Priest, our High Priest. There is power in Christ, great is the power of Christ, and it lies chiefly in this, that He was commanded to bring a sacrifice to God. It was a divine command laid upon Him, when God called Him to be a sacrificing Priest. The Apostle Paul says, "For every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."(Hebrews 5 verse 1).The things pertaining to God are, His person, His character, and His justifying, and sanctifying a sinner, and adopting a sinner as a child, and walking with the sinner as a friend, helping him, and supplying his needs continually. Consider our High Priest then as powerful, I name one of the greatest of all things in which He has power, and that was to lay down His life. This was what He was commanded to do, and in this there are these things, which are indispensable, first the putting away of sin, He served God in putting away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself. He did not serve the legal elements of the old dispensation, He was not a priest under that dispensation, if he were, he could not be a priest. He could not have entered into that dispensation as a priest, for He was not of the tribe of Levi. He served God in another dispensation, and another covenant, the covenant of grace, to put away sin. It was powerful indeed in Him to put away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself.

This is very considerable, very observable, much to be observed by us, that all our hopes of reconciliation with God are centred here. It must be so with every child of God, that his only way of access, the only means of his beholding the face of God with joy, his only hope of having his guilty conscience purged from dead works, must be centred in this work of his great High Priest. In making an end of sin, He put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. Is it not so with you in experience, when you go to God, when slips and falls have defiled you, when corruptions in you and the foolishness of your hearts and minds has led you astray, has it not been so, and must it not always be so?

That your hope of cleansing and of having the cause of separation purged away has centred in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. The boldness of faith derives from this, and your faith can never be properly bold, unless it is fixed here, and receives its strength from this sacrifice. The atonement will give boldness, and nothing else can. The atonement is the only pleadable plea, of the people of God. Mark that whenever you come before God with your trouble, with your sin, with your fears, whenever you see before Him, that the things which have befallen you, are deserved by you, the one plea He will listen to, the ground on which you will stand and have access and acceptance, must be this, the death of the Lord Jesus.

Consider then what it is to faith, what it is to a distracted sinner, what it is to one who would often be near his God. Why dear friends, must you not very quickly be locked up in despair, if the atonement of Christ were blotted out from your view? The power of Christ then in His priestly office is very great. He took upon Himself, as God called Him to be a priest to effect reconciliation, and this He did in the body of His flesh, through death. And whenever you get that experimental reconciliation which His death effected on the cross, you will find that it is the power of His precious blood.

Strength in the next place is the eternal unchangeable priesthood, of our High Priest. "The priests of the old dispensation "were not suffered to continue by reason of death." (Hebrews 7 verse 23). There was a constant succession of priests, the father died and the son stood in his place, and the Apostle speaks, "And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made a priest." (Hebrews 7 verse 20). The Levitical priesthood were made priests without an oath. When the dispensation of Levi had answered its purpose, when the shadow died away because the substance had come, there was no further use for the Levitical priesthood. It was but a type, a beautiful type, but it was only a type. The shadow and not the body, but the body came, and the shadow passed away. This man, because in His nature as a man united to God, hath an unchangeable priesthood. He continues ever as a man, therefore His Priesthood continues. There is a blessed perpetuity in this with no end. His name is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13 verse 8).

If that be so, what a comfort it is to one who is ever changing in himself and in his feelings.

Brisk and dull in half an hour,  
Hot and cold, and sweet and sour; (Gadsby's 301 verse 4)

And ever contracting fresh guilt, because of indwelling sin, or some sin or sins indulged. But here is one, who has undertaken to bring the many sons unto glory, "In bringing many sons unto glory." (Hebrews 2 verse 10). Their great High Priest, and therefore we are to consider Him in this particular, as being a continuing priest. Hence in the chapter I read, we read. "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore 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." (Hebrews 7 verse 24 & 25).

A great encouragement this is to faith, when it is opened by the Holy Spirit. A great thing to see, One who changes not, and whose face is perpetually towards the sinner, whose pleading with God is always efficacious and prevailing. To see one whose sacrifice endures eternally, and whose intercession can never cease, so long as there is a poor sinner to intercede for. Give Him your cases my friends, He will take them up. His kindness is such, His mercy and His faithfulness in His office are such that you can never take an evil case to Him upon which He will not look. He will never turn His eye or heart from a repenting sinner. Consider these things, in respect to our great High Priest.

A cursory glance is of no use, a living, a powerful consideration of Christ, a look not only with earnestness, and feeling that here lies your life, here is your hope, here is your beauty, here is your righteousness, and your holiness. Here is your success with God, to whom you have access by Jesus Christ. Look then not only at this, but meditate on this with whatever evil you have to contend with. You may take it to Him and He will not disdain you. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." (Psalm 102 verse 17). Beloved friends this exhortation then is a suitable one to us, as it should gather our minds away from the variety of things which have no value, no real value to us. To say to Him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand," (Song of Solomon 5 verse 10), and the "altogether lovely", (Song of Solomon 5 verse 16), This is "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession."

Let us look then at this profession, to profess is to say something, to profess is to say the things that have always been said about God, about Christ, and about the Holy Ghost. You may make many a profession before God without any man knowing it. A loud profession of religion may cover a wicked heart, and a wicked heart and an apparently godly life may go together for a time. Solomon speaks of it as, "Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross". (Proverbs 26 verse 23). Shun a profession that is not from the heart, and is not accompanied with a life according to it.

Better for people never to name religion than to name it with hypocrisy. The Apostle Paul says, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2 verse 19). Let us then look a little further at his profession. A profession of Christ, a profession concerning His Person. I wish it might please God to make us well acquainted with the Person of Christ, the foundation of the hope of our souls. What do you profess concerning His Person? The Apostle John says, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:" (1 John 4 verse 3). Think of it, do you profess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that the Son of God became a perfect man, with a holy body and soul, in union with His Divine Person? It is a great thing to profess this because He is the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

But take this as before us in the text particularly, a profession respecting the Apostle Christ Jesus. Consider what the Apostle is, a messenger, one sent, anointed to preach, to declare things for preaching, in declaring, announcing, and opening up. And Christ came to declare, to announce and to open up the scriptures. He came from heaven to speak of heavenly things. Do not expect to grasp them, they are to be revealed to you, you will then believe them. You will believe what you are not able to understand. If you could understand and comprehend all divine things, you would be divine. But faith believes what is incomprehensible, faith holds that as a substance, which it could never beat out, by human reason. It holds this as an infalible truth, that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3 verse 16).

This is a profession, a godly profession. What do you believe then concerning this God, that He came from heaven to bring good news to you, that really He came to announce the holy gospel in your soul, to bring to you the peace of God, when you had no peace in your own conscience by reason of your sin? To announce to you that He would be with you throughout your difficulties, and bring you honourably to your grave. Never leaving you, nor forsaking you. Is this your profession, where do you make it? chiefly in secret. The glory of God is the greatest as seen by faith in secret. Dont be anxious to make a loud profession before men, but let your works declare what you are, while your tongue may be silent, profess as much as you can in secret. Confess and profess unto God, and protest before Him, that you were ready to perish, and He came and saved you. That you were guilty, and He came and put away your sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

That you were weak, and He brought strength to you by the gospel. That you were dark and He made you light in the Lord. That you were tempted and He delivered you, He brought good news from a far country, and faith receives that good news. The profession concerning His priesthood, penitents make the best profession here. Penitents, such as the publican, who prayed "God be merciful to me a sinner". Guilty people make the best profession with regard to the atonement, for they say.

Nothing but Thy blood, O Jesus!  
Can relieve us from our smart;  
Nothing else from guilt release us;  
Nothing else can melt the heart.  
Law and terrors do but harden,  
All the while they work alone;  
But a sense of blood bought pardon;  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone. (Gadsby's 746 verse 2).

The very soul of right profession is here, the Psalmist made a good profession when he said, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" "For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Psalm 130 verses 1, 3, 4, 7). Was not that a fine profession? Good in the highest sense of the word, a good profession made by your souls in the presence of God, a protestation to Him, that you had no hope, but in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Hold fast our profession" says the Apostle (Hebrews 4 verse 14). and also "Hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3 verse 14).

This profession concerning the death of Christ, will continue in the Church, as long as there is a Church in the earth. And when she sings as one complete Church in heaven, they will well sing "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father;" (Revelation 1 verses 5 & 6). Why dear friends if we could not make this profession, what would become of us. Have you hope in nothing else? Is there no hope of being cleansed from your sin anywhere else, in no other than this. In Him who shed His blood. This then is a profession, and it is made, I repeat, by penitent repenting saints, the Saviour owns. They own it with blessed feeling at times of lively hope in Him. They own it in faith, the profession of faith is a good profession.

We may say many things we do not understand, even about Christ. Many things we shall have to speak of, as Job spoke of his many things,

"Who is he that hiddeh counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." (Job 42 verse 3). and " I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42 verse 5 & 6. A living profession, an honest godly profession. It does not mean much to men, who know nothing about it. It does not sound a great thing, to say that you are a sinful person, and that you are perpetually walking in things in your hearts, that are not good, but when you feel this, when you feel, now here I have been sitting in the service of the Most High God, and my mind has been wandering here and there. One says, I have been building my house, or I have been repairing it, another says, I have been working in my garden, and a third says, I have been at business all the time. What then, can you wipe your mouth, by saying what you have done? It is nought, it is nought? No, you will go to business tomorrow, and you will get things that perplex or annoy you, and your temper rises, and if you did not speak improper words, you think them, and so you are guilty, a murderer in the sight of God, yet you are a child of God. What are you to do? Shall I again say? Can you say it is nought, it is nought, what then? "For Thy names sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great" (Psalm 25 verse 11). I have sinned in my heart, I have sinned with my eyes, I have sinned with my thoughts, and if my tongue has been restrained from uttering wrong things, I have had them all within me, thought them, felt them, and is this a profession? Yes, a profession you need not make to any man. Only one priest is needed here, and this is the High Priest.

A profession which He listens to,

He kindly listens while they tell

The bitter pangs they feel within. (Gadsbys 762 verse 2).

They profess with penitence, they profess in faith, faith in the bleeding Lamb. They profess also with love, love is a great thing in true religion. It might well be said that true religion is a religion of love, God's love, and then the sinners love to Him, Christ's love, and the sinners love to Him. The Spirit's love, and the sinners love to Him. It was a penetrating question, that Christ put to Peter, to restored Peter."Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" (John 21 verse 15). Thou didst profess more love than thy brother disciples, they, all of them forsook Me. Thou saidst thou wouldst never forsake Me, but thou didst forsake Me more than the others. Now thou art restored, dost thou love Me more than thy brother disciples? Lord, he said, Thou knowest that I love Thee. The question was repeated, Thou pierced Me and grieved Me. Do you feel you can say, you love Me? Love My Person?

The Son of God Incarnate, whose glory is bearable, whose kindness is life, whose salvation is everlasting. Do you love Him, love Him for coming, love Him for dying, love Him for rising again, love Him for ascending into heaven, and for interceding there? It is a good thing to have love, if a man have not love, he is none of Christ's. The Apostle solemnly speaks of it, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Corinthians 16 verse 22). Let him be a devoted person, devoted to the cross, this devotion he highly regards and thinks a good deal about it, but it is nothing unless it is supreme. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." and, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution; and in the world to come eternal life." (Mark 10 verses 29,30).

Have you ever felt that love, that has Him for its only object? All other things have to go, they say it in love, when they profess His Priesthood to be the only hope there is. They make their profession with expectancy, and they expect things from Him. Faith goes forward as well as backwards. Faith goes to Him in whom all supplies are found, all supplies for this life, and for the life to come. For a good conscience, a humble mind, a consistent walk, for true affections, for abiding in His love, for holding fast "the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3 verse 14. You you will find all here, and the expectation is very sweet sometimes," and, "the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." (Psalm 9 verse 18). Whatever you expect, respecting salvation, if you expect all from Christ, that expectation shall not perish for ever, but you may be disappointed many times.

So you have to Consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession, with all the expectation that you can. One writes, and we sing sometimes,

Saints, raise your expectation high;  
Hope all that heaven has good;  
The blood of Christ has brought you nigh  
Invaluable blood. (Gadsby's 803 part verse 3)

Bless God for the blood of Jesus Christ, and bless Him for a living hope in that blood. That will bring you honourably through everything. Our profession that God is faithful, the faithfulness of God is an attribute that is more and more precious as people get older, and as eternity gets nearer.

As eternity gets nearer, the faithfulness of God to His promise, becomes more and more to the soul. Faithfulness respects engagements on God's part, yes engagements on God's part, has He engaged Himself to any of you? Yes, when He said to some, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee. He could not forsake that person, and be a faithful God. Or when He said "I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psalm 32 verse 8). If He were to leave that person to take fatal steps in darkness, He could not be a faithful God. When He said He would, "compass me about with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32 verse 7). If He left that person to die with troubles surrounding him, the effect of that trouble would be that He was unfaithful. We profess to believe in a faithful God, and some of us have proved Him to be so. It was a good profession that Joshua made, when he professed to Israel, "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in your hearts and in your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." (Joshua 23 verse 14).

So far they had come, so far they had proved God's faithfulness, and can you not say this, are not you bound to say it, to the honour of your High Priest, that you have lacked nothing? That not one word He has given you, has thus far failed, you must speak well of Him. Bless Him for His faithfulness. We profess His wisdom, Christ is the wisdom of God, the wisdom of God in the incarnation, and in the atonement, and in the gospel, and in the promises of the gospel. O the wisdom of God, "I will guide thee with mine eye". You say, I am in trouble, did He not guide you? but you have procured this unto thyself. Did He not guide you? who knows from what evils He is saved from, when God brings him into trouble? The day is coming, when people will say, with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; (Psalm 119 verse 71) "Before I was afflicted I went astray: that I might learn Thy statutes." (Psalm 119 verse 67). We profess these things respecting our High Priest, and consider Him, may we more and more consider these matters because they are for our peace. They make for our growth in grace, and for the establishing in the ways of God.

Dear brethren, more and more seek grace from God to consider these things, the things that make for your peace. And go out to Him with your poverty, your weakness and your ignorance, and all the infirmities that compass you about. Remembering that to go to Him, who is a merciful and faithful High Priest, who has said, "Come boldly unto the throne of grace." (Hebrews 4 verse 16). Come with your poverty for,

"Riches and honour are with Me; yea, durable riches and righteousness." (Proverbs 8 verse 18). Come to Me for I am your life, come to Me with your ignorance, for I am wisdom. Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." (Proverbs 8 verses 34 & 35).

Amen.