

B97-82
La P812Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
Wednesday evening 3.6.1925.

"Thus saith the Lord 'Stand in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein'."

Jeremiah VI, 16

They were not irreligious people; they were not people who were destitute of some rational knowledge. The oracles of God were committed to them; the ordinances of God had been given to them. He had given them His good Spirit and exhorted them, had sent His prophets, rising early to them and bidding them how to live - to walk in all His ordinances. They were not irreligious, but they found the service of the Lord weariness, too straight, strict, burdensome and the ways of the gods about them were easier ways and allowed sin, and they chose these easier ways and walked in sin, walked in idolatry and the Lord was provoked. He sent enemies against them. He visited their sin; he punished them. He sent them into captivity again and again, and now Jeremiah, the mournful, weeping prophet, whose ministry seemed to have little or no good effect, opposed, hated, persecuted, still moved and instructed by His God told the people what would be the end of their continuance in rebellion, in idolatry, and this solemn chapter of judgement is this gracious word, like as Elijah said to Israel - "If the Lord be God, serve Him. If Baal be God, serve him, and he brought them to a test. So here - Stand in the ways. You are halting between two opinions. You are in a way, and here are ways before you to the right hand and to the left. Your mind is this way and that way, and the way that appeals most is the way that looks easier, the very easiest of all and you choose, naturally we do that, Now said the Lord by that, stand. Do not hurry. Stand and look and enquire, is there a sign-post? Read it. Is there a direction? Follow it. Has this any application to us? Are any of us in doubt as to which way to go? In doubt about the path we should walk in? Says the Lord - "Stand now". Make no hurry. Enquire. Ask for the old paths. Early this morning this word had some authority in my own heart. You may, with me, some of you at least, be a good deal troubled, perplexed. There is a rough path and though faith in your hearts says, it is a right path, there is a nature in you that would reject it, does reject it. Something says it is too difficult, this waiting on God that is spoken about in the scripture, this choosing a cross, and taking it up to carry it; this bearing reproach, the reproach of Christ, whose heart was broken by reproaches, this crushing and grinding of old nature to powder, nothing being made of it in the scripture, it is just sin. Why

walk in such a path? Why choose such difficulties? Take thine ease soul, eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow shall be as this day and much more abundant. So we speak after the flesh. So the flesh chooses anything but a cross; any way but a rough one and very solemn it is. Now God has cast up a way in which He will have His people walk and they naturally with all others would often have a smoother way and O the innumerable times some have turned aside and the objections of the flesh to the way of the cross and of crucifixion, God only knows them all but we have provoked Him to chasten us. He has sent enemies, troubles, afflictions, difficulties, and we have had to suffer, and we have seen His judgements. He says "Continue not in those easy things for they bring nothing but trouble and they dishonour Me." Stand in the ways. Are you perplexed as to what to do, what is right, what will please God, what will honour His name, what will save your soul, what will lead you to peace and heaven at last? Now says the Lord "Stand". Do not rush thoughtlessly, madly, nor can you as rightly exercised. Stand in the ways, see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls. Impatient nature says "Why wait, we want rest now" Faith says, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart, wait I say on the Lord". As enabled I would speak a little of the old paths. Paths that have been travelled for many generations, despised by a fallen heart, a corrupted reason, a hasty spirit, still the old paths. Paths in which sinners and God have met; in which He has spoken to sinners and blessed them and given them grace to take the cross up and follow Him. Paths in which the Saviour has met with them; in which the Holy Spirit has come to them and spoken to their hearts. These old paths, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, blessed men of God, Enoch, they walked in them. David, the prophets, the apostles, the saints of old, they walked in these old paths. And the man who walks in an easier path, who chooses what he thinks best, gets a notion of the doctrines of grace, runs away with that notion - grace is free, grace is sovereign and these doubts and this abandonment of the world and chiefly of self, this denial of self, too narrow, too difficult, therefore we will choose the easier way.

The old paths. First of all the old paths are the paths of faith, the way of faith, a good way, a believing in God, in Christ, in the Spirit, believing in sin imputed righteousness, believing in the sanctification of the Spirit, believing that Christ is sanctification and wisdom and strength. This way of faith is the old the good way. Let us look at it as we may be helped. It is the way that God has cast up. There are ways not cast up by Him, ways of religious flesh, religious confidence, religious ease, religious pleasure, ways that commend themselves to men, to people who have in their heads some

notion of the truth of the scripture but are not willing to leave all, take up their cross and follow the crucified Christ. This way of faith. It is the way exactly opposite, contrary to the way of sight. Abraham believed God. A childless man believed that his seed should be more than the stars of the heavens and the sand of the sea. Childless, and his faith went further and he believed in God and it was counted to him for righteousness. This faith saw no impossibilities; was not baffled by natural impossibilities. It looked to God; it believed in Him, hung about Him, waited for Him. This waiting is one of the severest tests to which faith is put. Waiting, but no sign of the word, the promise being fulfilled year after year. Believing in Him who had spoken it. Believing that He could not fail; that what He had promised He was able to perform. This will keep you from making haste. "He that believeth shall not make haste." If God tarries, faith will tarry and wait for Him. If God does not work, faith wont work. If He hide Himself, behind a cloud, faith will say "I will look to Him, wait for Him who hideth Himself from the house of Jacob." Some want to be right. Some are perplexed because they seek to be right and get more and more wrong. Some want to have that sweetness that does not come; that confidence that does not grow in their hearts and the little faith they have is staggered at times through the power of unbelief. But the great point of faith is, God hath spoken. A man's interest, his movements in the ways of God, the few steps if any he takes in the heavenly path, the kingdom of God in him not growing but rather apparently becoming weaker and weaker so that doubts arise as to whether there is the kingdom of God there. The man with faith will never yield, though he sinks and fears he has two things before him at times; the first thing is that God who has quickened him into life and the second is that end he seeks, namely the salvation of his soul and he will wait. He will wait till he dies but give up he cannot. The fire has water poured upon it, and the mystery is, how does the fire live. Oil is poured upon it. God increases, at least He strengthens faith, when He appears not to increase it, or to be doing anything for the soul. Now this way of believing is the best way you can ever walk in. "Make haste", says unbelief to God. Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work that we may see it". This is that wicked spirit that is in us, that wicked spirit that would dictate to God and hasten His work. Faith says "I believe God." Will He do this or that?"I do not know"says the sinner, "but I believe Him", and when you have got any word to stand on, faith will wait on that, but if you have no word to stand on, if you are a lost person with no ground apparently, with no reason apparently to believe or even think that God will save you, if you have faith, it will wait. This is the old path. "I wait for the Lord, my soul

doth wait, is the language of a believing man. Satan will hurt you by tempting you. Unbelief will confuse you by turning your eyes to yourself and what you are and what you feel and what you do and providence may seem to side with sense and reason and you will be sorely put to it but if you are walking rightly no god of nature will cause you to turn aside; at least if you turn aside you will soon have to come back. Abraham waited. He waited 20 years. David waited and lived through all the persecutions of Saul. David waited and you will find men in the scriptures are waiting men. Heavenly men wait for heavenly influences, heavenly communications, heavenly strength, heavenly power, they wait for heavenly things. They wait for things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive them; they wait for them. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness" There is a glory set before faith sometimes that keeps its head above the water. There is a strength put into faith that keeps it waiting, that enables it to wrestle sometimes. There is a light put to the eye of faith that directs it to the source of that light - the Sun of Righteousness. "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait and in His word do I hope" This is the old path. It is a very different path from the natural, notional path of rational belief. This rational faith or belief will hurry you on; will be content with notion without power; with the letter of truth without the Spirit of truth, and a professor does not know the danger that he is in. He does not suspect that He is without God. He has no suspicion of the terribleness of being without the power in his soul, so he just goes heedlessly on - "The simple pass on and are punished." Their own iniquity overtakes them. They are presumption itself (though happy). They are poor, destitute, ruined creatures. But a believer in God, he has the same views of truth perhaps and no other than the presumptuous, simple man, but he says "I want the power of these things in my soul. I cannot get it, God must give it. I cannot reach it, He can give it to me, and so he waits in the old path. If he turns aside and gets something as Abraham turned aside and had an Ishmael, he gets trouble. Ishmael was a trouble to Abraham and your Ishmael will be a trouble to you. It will end in mocking and trouble. Whatever you get that is not by faith, that does not come to you by the Holy Ghost, it will trouble you. Holy Mr Gifford, Bunyan said, gave good advice to his hearers - "Entreat the Lord to set you well down in every divine truth." Now brethren you may not get on much, many steps. Do not measure by miles, if I may so put it; measure by step One step in the path to heaven will bear fruit, that is, it will bring comfort to your soul, but great haste made by you will bring you into a deal of trouble. Turn aside, you will get wounded or robbed. Wait in this old path

and you will find good. The day will come when you will say "I have found Him". You will say "It is not a vain thing to serve the Lord." You will understand the difference between the contempt and mocking of your old nature that says "the service and table of the Lord are contemptible," and that holy belief in Him that brings you to say "It is worth waiting for. I will wait on Him, I will wait for Him" and any touch that He gives you will bring some sweet sustenance to you and help you to say "I will wait for more." This is the old path of faith, waiting on, waiting for God. Waiting for the witness of the Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God. Waiting for the power in your heart of these doctrines which you hold in your judgement. Waiting that your faith may be moved upon by the Eternal Spirit as the Spirit moved upon Samson betimes, so you will want the Lord to move upon your faith betimes to encourage you. And here you will find the path exceedingly difficult and remember this, the Lord never deceived anybody as to the path. He said "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He said "If you deny not yourselves and take your cross up, you cannot be My disciples." He never deceived a sinner. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" That is the way. The old path of faith. Faith in Jesus Christ, that pleads His blood and waits for the application of it. Faith that believes in self denial and seeks the Lord's grace, to bring that self denial to pass. Faith that believes in God answering prayer, and waits for the answer. Faith that justifies the Lord in all His dealings and that says "The judge of all the earth must do rightly. He is the Rock, there is no unrighteousness in Him" The language of faith is always like the scripture, it speaks for God. It encourages the seeker; it bids him wait; it tells him he cannot wait in vain. Are you perplexed? Do you meet with professors who find it quite easy to get on? You meet with people who say "Now the salvation of the church is assured; Christ died for her and saved her, therefore believing this you should be comfortable." Do you meet with professors who say "If you have had one word that is enough and go on your way rejoicing" and does this, if you meet with it, perplex you? Do you compare yourself with it and say now I cannot get on like that yet these people profess what I profess; believe what I believe, where is the difference? What is the difference? Watch and see. Now if you for an hour or longer turn aside with these people, do you get any satisfaction. Do you pray the more? Is God the greater? Is He better to you for this turning aside, this listening? Conscience will say "I get the worse; I get hardened, I become more or less indifferent for the time to waiting on God. It barrenizes my soul." Then turn from it and stand, and look for the fingerpost, that is the blessed word of God and the testimony of the Spirit in your heart, and wait, return and wait; return and look to this great One who will never disappoint you, never

disappoint you. Wait on the Lord, ask for the old path of believing. "O woman" said the Lord Jesus to a waiting one who argued in her waiting and waited in her arguing, "great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt" "Go in peace" said He to the woman whose issue of blood had drained her strength and life and wasted her substance, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee". O blessed sinner who can wait in faith.

Now in the next place and as I believe according to scripture, the old path is a path of prayer. Hart expresses the truth when he says

Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give.
Long as they live should Christians pray;
For only while they pray they live.

Now let me look at a sad experience which some of you may be painfully acquainted with, I mean in the restraining of prayer; the looking to this and to that, the leaning on your own wisdom directing you to do this or abstain from that; the fretfulness of your heart respecting and against the cross. What has that brought to you? You say, as you speak the truth of your experience, you say "All it has brought to me is guilt and barrenness and weakness and weariness and I do not know where I am". That is the fruit of the flesh, that is the fruit of the flesh, and you will never find anything better when you restrain prayer. What has God ordained? This - "Pray without ceasing", "Call upon Me", "Open thy mouth wide". "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden" This is the old path. Heaven's blessings are free and freely given, but the Giver of them says, in the dispensation of His mercy - "For these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do them for them". That is His way, His dispensation. He could, had it pleased Him, have given these things without any exercise, any prayer, or anything else, but He said "No, these beggars shall ask, these empty people shall crave My fulness; these weak people shall seek My strength. I have ordained for them these blessings and I will teach them to seek for them" That is the way. Stand here, stand here. If you make haste without prayer you will have to go back with shame. If you lean to your own understanding instead of asking counsel of the Lord, you will get trouble, you will walk into some snare, or some evil. Stand in this old way, the way ordained of God. "Come to Me" A fulness resides in Christ. He says "Ask and you shall receive" from it. Power is His. You are to seek power; -it is His ordained way. And this is true, you will find only as you are enabled to pray earnestly will you get along well. The slothfulness of a man casts him into a deep sleep. A very solemn thing. Are you afraid of it? I am. "Let me not sleep

the sleep of death." O to be slothful is a terrible thing. I have suffered so from it. I can speak feelingly, it is a terrible thing; a sin that God resents in His people. Fulness of bread, and idleness of hands are among the things he hates in His people, so He empties them. He brings them empty; He makes them feel they are not sufficient, and the way of prayer becomes a shining way, a beautiful way. Jesus Christ walked in this way. He spent nights and we spend hardly minutes; He spent nights in prayer. He knew His Father and loved Him and loved fellowship with Him and sought help from Him and received all that He sought, and we poor proud things, as empty as emptiness itself, turn aside and in effect say "What profit is there if we should pray unto Him" and the devil says "You are a Calvinist", "yes" you say, "well then you know everything is fixed by God; your blessings and your troubles and your ways and all the things He will give to you, they are eternally settled on you and they will come whether you pray or not". That is the terrible logic of Satan. That is the terrible logic of a wicked heart and the effect is, if we fall under the power of it, we restrain prayer, and if we restrain prayer, we are barren, unfruitful; we know not where we are until our bones stick out and our leanness protests against us and testifies against us. O praying people, ask for this old path, if you are not in it now. Here is prosperity, here is mercy, here is goodness, here is the glory of God, here He helps the weak and makes him stand; here He lifts up the hands which hang down. Prayer is the appointed way. Covenant blessings come in answer to a covenant prayer, that is the prayer covenanted and ordained by the Lord. Walk therein, this good way. David knew it well. "I sought the Lord and He heard me": "This poor man cried and the Lord delivered me from all my fears, out of all my troubles." Said the Psalmist "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice, and my supplications" and this so wrought upon him that he felt - now I have lived in this way. I have lived by this way. I have got good in this way, I will live in it. - "Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." O this will bring blessings. When you rise up in the night and pray, that is, in your spirit, good will follow. Lay up prayer my friends, lay up prayer for the time to come. Do you feel a fear of how you may stand? Pray, pray. Do you look forward to a bed of affliction and of death? Pray, pray. This is God's way. I think sometimes I have laid up thousands of prayers respecting my end. What a wonder it will be to get answers. Answers, you say, I want them now. Yes and so you hurry off to something. Nay, you will wait, if you have true faith and real prayer, you will be a waiting person. Ask for this old path and the Lord to put you into it and keep you in it. Keep you here - waiting in prayer, waiting on Him, by making known your requests to Him. Coming to Him with your burdens and your

labour and your trouble, and your necessities. Coming to Him with your weakness and your liability to fall every minute. Coming to Him for supplies for a good supply, as Paul expresses it in one place - a good supply of the Spirit.

You shall find rest for your souls here. Rest in the will of God as it is revealed to you and He gives you power to do it. You will find rest in the righteousness of the Saviour, in the blood of the atonement, in the power of the Lord Jesus. Rest in His intercession. You will find rest in respect of your prayers which sometimes you may be very disposed to despise. Such prayers, such chattering as yours, how can you think they will enter. O, says the word, there is a golden censor, and in it there is much incense, and that mingled with the prayers of the saints makes them acceptable, and you will ^{get} rest in regard of your prayers. You will say I am waiting for an answer. It entered as I felt when I prayed, it entered, now I am looking for an answer. You will find rest in this path. The old path in the next place is the path of love. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathama Maranatha" Very solemn. Do I love the Lord or no? If we love Christ we shall love His cross. We shall love His shame and the reproach that broke His heart. If we love Christ, we shall find love is one of the most separating powers that we can ever feel in our hearts. "Peace be on all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" But what a gift is this - three graces as the Apostle says, abide and the greatest of these is charity. Faith, hope, charity. Love, when faith is no longer needed, when hope has sweet death in realisation in glory, love will then abide. Love shall still abide, no other change shall that know save only to increase. Love, of course, people say, of course they love Him. I do not want a religion of course. A religion that is given and maintained by fresh communications, and love in that religion, must have these communications to warm, to revive it. That is a very solemn scripture that Jesus Christ has left in His word "Because iniquity abounds, the love of many shall wax cold." Is this open iniquity? Is it not rather in respect of the professing church? The iniquity of coldness, the iniquity of a false confidence, a false boasting of the truth, of the doctrines of truth. The iniquity that comes and rises up, in the form of a false confidence, as to the person's state and if you come into contact with this, it is such a contrast to your exercises, and the difficulties you perceive and feel, such a contrast to your fears,

and sinkings and tremblings, that if you are not preserved, your own love will suffer, it will wax cold. A voice will say now look at these comfortable christians, look at them, they are not troubled and plagued every day as you are, and if, I say again, you are not preserved, your love will wax cold. Or again, if the Lord withholds for a time the communications of His power, and O dear friends, must we not acknowledge the the absence of God from the church to-day, I speak generally, must we not acknowledge the lack of communications, the lack of the Spirit's presence and power, the lack of the atonement in the conscience, the lack of the righteousness of Christ, justifying, is there not a lack. I have a great lack and suffer much now with this withholding You do not see the Lord for a time, can you love Him? Do you love Him? Do you find your soul welling out to Him? Is He still, though absent, the chiefest among ten thousand? Is He the one to whom you can humbly address yourself and say "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee".

And what about a minister who labours in word and doctrine and sees very little effect, very little good done as far as he can judge, can he go on loving His Lord, and willingly serve Him, in all the barrenness and lack of usefulness that he suffers? Jeremiah could protest one thing, that he did not hasten from being a pastor. The pastor's office was difficult to him, because he had had so little success. All he got for his pains amongst men, his own countrymen, was hatred, persecution, bitterness. casting into a pit and prison, that is all he got, and if a minister labours and sees very little effect, some of his hearers may little suspect the grief and sorrow that now and again will keep him awake, and can he love the Lord in this condition. And you, when you get nothing in your souls, when the ministry is as it were barren and empty to you, can you go on loving the Lord. Ask for the old paths. And when the Lord says you are to do something you do not like, can you love Him and do it? Ask for this old path - patience, hope, the patience of hope and keeping the word of Christ's patience. This is one of the things in which you have to walk as an old path. "Because thou hast kept the word of of My patience" - patient waiting for Christ who does not come. Nature said in the scoffers of old "Where is the promise of His coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were" Now says Peter, "Beloved be not ignorant of this one thing that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day". We should be disposed to think that that was just a

rudimentary thing, one of the first of all the rudiments, the Being of God, and if He is God, that then no time reckons with Him. His time is Eternity, and He cannot be hurried in His work. "I the Lord will hasten it in His time". O but nature says "He promised." You said He promised to do something and He has not done it. A poor heart said "I thought He told me He would never leave me nor forsake me, and I have been days and weeks and months, and have not had His presence." And then you may say "I thought and believed He told me that He would really bless me in a certain thing and He has not done". Ah said poor Jeremiah - "O Lord Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived. Wilt Thou be altogether as a liar unto me, as waters that fail". A prophet of God said this. But what ground had he to say it? Why, the ground seemed good to him because the Lord had said to him in the beginning, "They shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail, and now they did prevail, they did, for they put him in prison. They let him down into the pit where there was no standing, and so in his heart he sank. He said "The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me" and yet love was there, and it will be with all the saints of God all through their troubles and difficulties. Love shall know no change, save to increase, but it is damped.

Ask for this old path. Walk in this as you are enabled, justifying Him, waiting on Him and believing that He is good, when He does not appear to be so in His dealings with you. Believing He can never be unkind, although He sends sharp rebukes and reproofs into your conscience. Believing this, "that as many as I love I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent". This is a good way. Dear friends, it is a good way, really a good way. Good, because it is God's, good because He cast it up; good because He is in it, good because it yields good to all who walk in it, in the Lord's time. It is the way of peace and rest. Ye shall find rest to your souls. Sweet rest, is the gospel rest. O there is no rest like the gospel rest, like the rest that the blood of Christ affords. The rest that His righteousness is. The rest that His mercy is. There is no rest like that and you wont be able to leap into it. Ordinarily there is a struggle, labour, groaning, sighing, weeping, waiting on God for that rest. "Come unto Me," but you are labouring and you are burdened, and therefore it is no easy thing to come to Him. No, nor does He intend it to be. And some said "But we will not walk therein". It is too narrow. It is too exclusive, and they say it is such bigotry to walk and talk like this. Why, these very doctrines

that they express. They have a peace that God has not given, a strength that does not come from Jesus Christ, so they walk in their own ways, in the light of their own eyes, these religious people, and when you see some of them you get perplexed. Now says the Lord, when this perplexity comes on you, you stand and you ask, ask of Him, ask of the scriptures, ask of the ancients, ask of them who have gone the way and are at rest and they will tell you this - "Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart, wait I say on the Lord" Wait in affliction, wait as Job did, though he said of his affliction, it increaseth, he said "I wait for Him". I want Him and though I cannot find Him, I go forward and He is not there and backward but I cannot perceive Him, on the right-hand where He doth work and on the left He hideth Himself, still he said "When He has tried me" I will wait for Him in the trial and when He hath tried me "I shall come forth as gold". It is all good my friends this waiting, it yields fruit, it yields good, it brings rest to the soul. "Ye shall find rest" Rest in God in Christ; rest in obedience, rest in the fruit of your labour, as Jesus Christ, so you will rest in the fruit of your labour, and then you will praise Him and say "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications."

Now what I would end with is this, beware of an easy religion. Beware of a path in which there is little or no tribulation. Beware of making haste in religion. Wait on God. Wait on Him. Ask that the power of truth may be in your souls, that the unction of the Holy One may teach you, that Jesus Christ may be in you the hope of glory, and until He is, until it please the Spirit to bring Him to you, wait. Ask for the old paths, and seek to walk therein, in the good way. It is a beautiful word - in the good way and therein you will find rest for your souls. May the Lord forgive what has been amiss and if it please Him, warn you by this word which I have humbly spoken, and spoken out of some strong personal exercise, that His Name may be glorified among us.