

15411-202

444, LAP 812

202

143

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 12 December, 1934

JUDE V 24 and 25

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from
falling, and to present you faultless
before the presence of His glory with
exceeding joy. To the only wise
God our Saviour, be glory and majesty,
dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

This word has made such music in my heart the last day or two that I must try to speak from it to you. There is such an experience as a real joy in God while you have great sorrow in providence. It is a great thing for you who know God to find this, to find that when your heart is overwhelmed within you, you can cry unto Him, this great God and Saviour and say - "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I". We must sink without this. If we have this, we cannot sink. We may be troubled, we may be knowing the truth of Christ's promise - "In the world ye shall have tribulation" - but also, therewith, peace. And this gives a prospect of victory. "I have overcome the world". "Be of good cheer", not because you have no trouble. "Be of good cheer" not because you never have a fear. "Be of good cheer", though you be the vilest sinner living. "Be of good cheer" when your hearts are led to the Rock Christ Jesus. His power is amazing to faith, an anchor to faith, a hope to faith, a joy to faith. His ability to help us is just equal to His power, His love, His goodness. Saints are bound to God's throne. Predestination, one of the first cords; glory, the last. It would be well for us if we were to read, solemnly and believingly, this Epistle. The exhortation in it is very great. Listen - "Beloved when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Because, speaking after the manner of men, this common salvation is continually assailed and we have in our hearts that which assails it; infidelity, pride, criticism, enmity, blindness, darkness, blasphemy. We have all these evils in our hearts and they

are in the world and they are manifested. Ever since God promised Christ in the garden of Eden, down through the many centuries that have elapsed since that date, enemies have been raised up by the devil, permitted to go by God, to fight against Jesus Christ. The common salvation is not meaning a common thing, but common to the saints. They all have it, they all possess it, and therefore all of them are liable to violent temptations of the devil, to deceiving teachers. Liable, by their own depravity, to deny the only Lord God and Jesus Christ.

Very briefly then, in the first place, I would speak to you about this common salvation. It is the doctrine of God; it is the doctrine of Christ. We greatly need that. I would exhort you who fear God to give yourselves more and more to the careful study of divine doctrine. You have experience; you need it, you desire it. Go to the ground of it. Go to the precious cornerstone which God has laid in Zion for a foundation. Go to the doctrine of the Trinity and to all these mercies which, as a pure river of water of life, flow from it. As you live, perhaps more and more you will find it needful to try the spirits in regard of doctrine. Says John - "Try the spirits whether they be of God or not". Try your experience by doctrine. If you are reproached for bringing doctrine forward, never mind. God will establish you more and more if you are enabled to give yourselves to reading and prayer in regard of the doctrine of the Bible. Dearly beloved friends, I exhort you, a poor minister and your old Pastor, give yourselves more and more to a prayerful and constant study of the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ. If you look into Timothy, you will find an exhortation of this kind. Says the Apostle to Timothy - Attend to doctrine. Study to show thyself approved unto God. Though it be addressed to a minister, it may be spoken to all the saints. Take heed to this. "Take heed", said Paul to Timothy. "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine". And when Titus was commanded by the Holy Ghost, through Paul, to ordain ministers in every city, and commit to them the doctrine of God, he was to do it; ordain ministers. Timothy had the same exhortation - ordain ministers, commit to them the word you have received. Commit the word to them who are faithful that they may teach others. So, dear friends, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God, the doctrine of Christ's perfect obedience, His

obedience unto death, the doctrine of His resurrection, and the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, who is a river, a well of water in every believer - give your attention to these things. Says the Apostle, earnestly contend for it. It is not a matter of indifference. I have had the pain of hearing old ministers say, we do not want doctrine; all we want is experience. We do want doctrine. Every believer rightly led by the Holy Ghost has doctrine for his foothold, for his foundation, for his hope. Hear then this word. How can I?, says one, how can I contend?, a poor ignorant creature. How can I hold fast? "Now unto Him that is able to keep you". Showing uncorruptness in doctrine. Hold it fast, dear friends, insofar as you have got it, and beg of God to make you wise in this important matter.

"Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling" into any error. You may find, as you live, the doctrine of God professed and yet if you look closely into the profession made you may find though it be covered with a thin covering that may be called truth, error is there. Be very careful. But O, when you feel too weak to obey an exhortation of this character, look to Him who is able.

What is this ability of God? Not simply looked at; not naked omnipotence. The Lord grant that no-one here, if it could please Him, may ever be touched by naked, natural omnipotence. It is natural and proper to God to be omnipotent but O, woe to that man, that woman, that church, that nation, that shall be touched with that omnipotence. It is a sword to slay you. It is a power to send a famine, a power to send a pestilence, a power to open the mouth of hell for unforgiven sinners. Pray that God's naked omnipotence in the law may become a divine ability in the Lord Jesus. He is the power of God, and that in the gospel, and that in the Spirit, and that in experience, and that in the walk of a child of God, causing it to be so consistent that He be not blamed, and that God be not reproached. This ability is Christ; it is in the gospel; it is in the Holy Ghost; it is in the Holy Scripture. It is a wonderful truth that all that God is capable of doing He will do in the church by Christ Jesus; He will do in providence for His people, by Christ Jesus; He will do in the soul by Christ Jesus. He will raise up hope; He will excite love; He will draw the soul by the alluring beauty of His Person. Ah dear friends, we do not know much about this. Not one of us can say he

knows much about this. Yet something of it is known; yes, something is known, when the touch of the Spirit is like a stream of life in you; when a touch of divine love is a new life to your feeling. When the King in His beauty is seen it is a new affection that rises up instantly for Him. His ability. O cast yourselves on the mighty power of God; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. Able? Yes, able to keep you from falling from what is right. What is right? Faith in the Lord Jesus. What is right? Faith in the Holy Ghost. What is right? Faith in the eternal Father of Jesus Christ. May we know more and more the doctrine of the Trinity. There is the foundation of all good. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling" into any persistent backsliding. You may think sometimes when you have got a little favour, now you are safe. You may say my mountain stands strong. If you say that boastingly you will find that God will hide His face. Then you will be a weak creature and not see your signs. Backsliding is one of the most grievous of our many sins. Our fallen nature is an offensive thing to God, but what is more offensive than that is that, when a child of His indulges that nature in its lusts and vanity and pride. O, He does resent backsliding in His people. That I have proved. And though He has afflicted me sore in days gone by as well as now, He has not given me over unto death. But do ask God to keep you in a tender state of mind respecting your walk. Redeem the time, my friends, because the days are evil. Walk circumspectly and not as fools. Walk as men who know God, who have been called by Him, blessed by Him, justified by Him, sanctified by Him. Walk as men who have the light, who are the children of light. Says Paul to the Thessalonians, you are the children of light; therefore walk accordingly. And John says that in Him is no darkness at all and if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with Him and with one another. Mind, if you can, the first wrong step. Beg of God to save you. Mind a trifling spirit; be careful of such a spirit. Be careful of your speech. "Set a watch upon my mouth; keep the door of my lips" is a good petition. God give us grace to pray again and again such a prayer. It will cure us of a bad habit if we are in the habit of speaking unadvisedly. Set a watch, a divine caution, on my mouth and let Thy hand keep the door, lock the door, of my lips.

Able to keep you from falling into a bad spirit. What would you

call a bad spirit? I should call that a bad spirit that rebels against God's dealings. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. What would you call witchcraft? I would say witchcraft is a pretension to foresee events. Rebellion is a wicked rising up of the spirit against the exercise of God's sovereign pleasure in dealing with you, and while witchcraft would pry into divine secrets, rebellion is an outcry against His sovereign dealing, and truly some of us know that holy, awful Scripture, "The rebellious dwell in a dry land". May the Lord keep us from that.

Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling into a denial of His goodness. O, He is a good God. When you come into some experience of His love and mercy, you have that to stand on, but it may not be very establishing to you. Then, when you do not read your title, when you have not got in your hand the secret, the solid evidences, and when you cannot dare to think you have got any open evidences, then you will be disposed, by the tempter, to deny that God has done anything for you. O, it does not honour God, my friends, to deny what He has done. If you have had repentance it does not honour Him to say you have not had it. When you have been raised to a good hope through grace it does not honour Him to say you have got no hope. "Hold fast that which thou already hast that no man take thy crown". God is able to keep us from that.

Unto Him that is able to keep us from destruction by the devil. You know what is said concerning him. He walketh about as a lion seeking whom he may devour. Speaking of the serpent God said, dust shall be his meat. The devil has plenty of dust to eat in the world, wicked men. But when he comes to look at a saint or at a Church of Christ, then he roars seeking to devour their faith and their hope and their love and their souls; to hurl them into destruction endless. Are you able to keep away from him, or keep him at bay? No. Who is? God is. The devil went into court with Joshua, an adversary in the court where Joshua was clothed with filthy garments. What a case for the devil. You may be like that and there is this adversary. He will accuse you. Accuse you, not only in your own conscience, but as before God. Christ was equal to it; able to save Joshua from the lion. "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan". We need this keeping.

Able to save you from falling into a disregard of His dealings or from a fainting under His discipline. "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord". Now if you do not see God in a chastening you are in great danger, though you be a saint. If you look at it just as a circumstance that may happen to anybody, a trouble that fills the whole world of men, then you miss, and it is a serious offence not to regard the operation of God's hand. Those who never do regard it are destroyed. O, but the devil will come in here, and tempt you to just look round and see plenty of people with trouble, plenty of people in a worse case than you are, and so he will take your eye from God and place it on men. A solemn, an evil spirit that is. Take the case of David when Shimei cursed him. Men might have said, O there are plenty of people ready to curse David. That would not have helped David. This helped him - faith. And he said to one who would have cut off Shimei's head, the Lord hath bidden him curse. That is, God was first with David. David was held by Jesus Christ. Omnipotence, clothed in his own nature, helped David greatly. The Lord hath bidden him do it. Have you some trouble? Have you some providence that you do not know what to do with? Have you a difficulty in your way? a perplexity in your path, in your case? and are you tempted to use reason and say O other people have the same or worse? That is not a right spirit. The right spirit is to fall flat before God. I cannot, you say. He is able to keep you from fainting or from despising. Trouble will give a saint, under the Spirit's grace, many an errand to the throne of grace. If we could do without Him we should not go to Him, such is our depravity, such is our unbelief. But He says, by some dealings, "My son give Me thine heart", and the Spirit comes as a well of water into your heart, pure water from the river of life, and that well in you is living water, pure water, the Spirit's gracious power. Able. Christ sends His Spirit to work this in the heart. A keeping power, an upholding power, a guiding power, a protecting power, a supporting power, so that poor, weak, tried people get through. Yes, they get through. God honours them.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from a dead, careless profession and a prayerless state of mind. Who can keep himself? None can keep alive his own soul. 'Tis a painful experience, this death that comes. Indifference comes, hardness of heart comes, blindness of mind happens to us, and we are in a sad and sore

condition. Who can keep us? Only God.

Unto Him that is able to keep us from making too much of this world, the world being set in our hearts. A very dangerous thing, because the world outside appeals to us. It appeals to us. I suppose, I believe, there is no person in this congregation more worldly, if as worldly, as myself by nature. O, but how will God keep you from it? I will tell you. If you get a glimpse of the Lord Jesus by faith, if you hear a whisper from His divine lips, if a Scripture comes into your soul with His own gracious, efficacious power, then you will say

Let worldly minds the world pursue
It hath no charms for me

You will find it so. Nothing else will keep us.

Unto Him that is able to keep us from denying the only Lord God and Jesus Christ. I will never deny Him, says one. Peter said so and Peter denied Him. God grant us faith to hold us up. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe".

Next, "and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" O, it was music in my heart the other day. To present you, you, a defiled creature, you a poor sinner falling many a time in the day in your spirit, you, too proud to pray sometimes, and too proud to acknowledge God sometimes, and too stiffnecked to bend before Him. You? No, says one. You, says the Holy Ghost. Whence is this faultlessness? From Him who is the righteousness and the holiness and the love and the wisdom and the power that the Church of God needs and has no other way. Faultless? It has an attraction to it has it not, at times, that Christ will put His beauty on you; that all your comeliness comes from Him; that you have not a single thread of silk or of anything of beauty to add to that comeliness which He has put on you. Righteousness to the believer comes from heaven and that, with the river of water of life cleansing the filth of his depravity and his wicked heart and life, that will constitute the faultlessness of the church and of every saint.

"Before the presence of His glory." A glory so dazzling in God that it cannot be borne, and so lovely in Christ that the more it is seen the more it is desired. That glory that a poor, wretched creature, can hardly dare to hope for, yet it is made out to him when it is given, imputed, freely brought by the Holy Ghost to a sinner. "With exceeding joy". Joy is a great thing. The joy of the Lord is the strength of a sinner. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" says Nehemiah to the people of God. What is this joy? Union with Christ, life from Christ, justification by Christ, holiness by Christ, and this joy realised is wonderful. It will fill the soul when the day comes for it to appear before God. "Absent from the body present with the Lord."

"To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" and every saint will say that Amen, at least when he gets to glory, if not earlier.

AMEN.