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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 14 April 1935

MARK 11 v 22

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have
faith in God"

The grace of faith in the heart is a fight, a life, a grace that God has greatly honoured; the cardinal grace. Every other grace, so to speak, is in a sense dependent on faith; at least, as faith is high, they are high; as faith is low, they are low. If faith is weak then it seems that every other grace is weak. It is a mysterious grace.

True faith's the life of God;
Deep in the heart it lies;
It lives and labours under load;
Though damped, it never dies

It will empty you, those of you who have it, it will empty you of all confidence in self. It will guide you, it will turn your eyes to God because, coming from God, it goes to Him. Being wrought by the Spirit it is helped by the Spirit. Every motion of faith stands in the power of God, not in the wisdom of man. The people who have it have to leave the world. It says in their hearts, there is nothing here that can satisfy you. A testimony that flesh and blood hates, but that the Spirit loves. It speaks well for God. Accompanied always by love, it wont hear anything against God. Well, the Apostle says to Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith". You must not expect an easy path if you have faith. You must look for conflict; you must expect the devil, as well as the flesh, to be continually opposing you. Jesus wrought that wonderful miracle, cursing the barren fig tree and causing it to wither; not a few leaves to drop off but the life of it, root and branch to wither. What men used to speak is this; this is to be improved. They talked about improving things; the old ministers did. And not a bad expression; they meant simply to take advantage of circumstances; to take advantage of the death of the body to consider

the latter end; to take advantage of trouble, that it might be of real use to the soul. And sometimes some of you will understand what the Scripture says, that God has an end in sending trouble, and faith believes that. What is that end? "That ye might be partakers of His holiness" "Have faith in God." I, with great feebleness I know, endeavoured this morning to direct your faith to God; it is there that your faith lives. On Him faith relies; a naked faith on God, on His Word, is a God glorifying faith. Some of you may have read, and indeed I believe I have named it here before, that when John Vinall, that remarkable minister at Lewes and in Brighton more than 100 years ago, was advised in his prosperity to make some provision for his wife, and he told her what his friends had advised, she said I would rather trust the naked promise of God than have all the gold in the Bank of England. That was faith that honoured God; a naked trust. Abraham had it; "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me seeing I go childless?" All his wealth was nothing to him because he was looking for a son and a son did not come. The Lord took him out on an evening and had him look at the stars and count them if he could, and, said God, "So shall thy seed be". Naturally impossible; God had brought it to that condition that the promise of a seed could not naturally come. "So shall thy seed be". Faith said, I believe it. He believed in God and Paul takes advantage of that and teaches it; Abraham was counted righteous; not because he had been then circumcised, for that right was given as a confirmation or a sign. Paul had this confidence in God, when everything seemed against him; a creaking vessel, roaring waves, soldiers conspiring to leave the ship; everything against him. He said to his fellow voyagers, I believe in God; I believe it will be even as it was told me; no life shall be lost. That faith honoured God. Faith waits for God. When He comes then the soul says, "This is the Lord, we have waited for Him". So every child of God in his measure and time fixed by God, comes to the same thing. What a mercy it is to have faith. If you have got faith as a grain of mustard seed you will overcome everything that opposes you. You say, I cannot believe it. You will do it if you have got faith; you will overcome. The Scripture says so; I therefore am warranted to say so. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God". Human knowledge, no good here. Resolutions to do this or avoid that, no good here. Faith in God. You will hang about Him; you will hanker after Him. You will

feel to love Him. You will trust Him. You will plead the blood of Christ. You will go with confession of your sins continually, more or less continually. You will do these things if you have faith. And faith will oppose all that is of the flesh and the flesh will oppose all that is of faith. Paul in the Galatians teaches us this. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would". You know what that is, you who have the life of God in you. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." You want to go your own way, to do your own things; have your own independence; walk after your own ideas, by the flesh, and all that life of yours is opposed to the Spirit. It lusteth, willeth. "Lusting" is a good old English word. "Lusting" - willing, hankering, desiring, striving. "And the Spirit against the flesh". The Spirit says, heaven, Christ, God, gospel, holiness, righteousness, wisdom, revelation of Christ. And every one with faith enters into this experience more or less distinctly. "Have faith in God".

Well, dear friends, as enabled I shall endeavour to take you into two or three other particulars, "in God". That means I must leave everything else, and endeavour to help you to leave everything else; just depend wholly upon God. First, have faith in the wisdom of God. The man who sits down and in his mind and intention carves out his own destiny, as he would speak or think, is a man who is a mad-man, a fool; ignorant, worldly, entirely. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps". No man can find his way to God by wisdom. After that God, in His wisdom, has turned the wisdom of the world into foolishness, He reveals His Son. Now in this I shall deal with two particulars. First, trust. Believe in the wisdom of God for your eternal good, for salvation, for forgiveness of sin, for justification in the righteousness of Christ, for sanctification from the holiness of Christ. A remarkable word, which I read just now - He is made sanctification to His people. Now where faith is there is much rubbish; so much sin, so much vileness, so much pollution to contend with, that the man is of necessity, and also choice, compelled to look out of self unto Christ. Every believer is brought to this. His language is, none but Jesus can do me good; none but Jesus can satisfy my soul; none but Jesus can sanctify my affections and cause me to set my affections on things above where Christ sitteth

on the right-hand of God. Growth in grace comes in here. "But", says Peter by the Spirit "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". Grow in grace, then you have got a root; rooted, built up, in Him. And growth in grace is generally, more or less distinctly, accompanied by a sad experience of death, of sin, of everything that is evil. And faith, having a revealed Christ to look to, strikes her roots down into His Person, into His love, into His grace, into His precious blood, and there is growth; a growth of confidence in Him; a growth of hope by Him; a growth of love to Him; a growth of waiting on Him. "Grow in grace". Grow downward; then you will bear fruit upward. Have faith that God can take you by the very gates of hell into heaven. Have faith that He can turn to a good account all your troubles - soul troubles I am dwelling on - all the conflicts with the devil, all the opposition of the flesh, all the contradictions of reason. Ah, it is no easy thing to be a Christian, and every believer finds it to be a conflict.

The flesh dislikes the way,
But faith approves it well;

Well, my brethren, this is a point. Wisdom, the wisdom of Christ. He says, I will make darkness light, and crooked things straight, rough places plain. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low". The flesh hates it; faith loves it. God comes here, Christ comes here, the Spirit comes here. Have this faith. "Have faith in God". Christ is the wisdom of God, and He is made unto us wisdom profitable to direct us. Faith points out the way. Ah, Hart has a verse in that hymn we had at the close of this morning's service; it is the first verse

"Brethren, let us praise our Lord,
Exalt His blessed Name;
Let us hear and keep His Word;
His glory be our aim,
Let us resolutely strive

What to do?

Let us resolutely strive
To work God's work with full intent

What is that? "To believe on Him whom He hath sent"

(Hart's Hymns No. 23 Page 30)

I regret the omission of that verse from that beautiful hymn - two verses only we have of it (779) "Faith implanted from above" and so on.

Let us resolutely strive
To work God's work with full intent;
And what is it? To believe
On Him whom He hath sent.

Easy enough, says one. Easy faith is just a notion. Difficult for the believer. The world against it, flesh against it, the devil against it.

Have faith in the wisdom of God in regard of providence. Providence has a great deal to do with Christian religion; you will find it so as you go toward heaven. Circumstances! God's creatures, not ours; we are not creatures of circumstances. Circumstances come to creatures and God, in a particular way, watches over His people, His Church, and providence has much to do with them in regard of experience. You can hardly, by any possibility, sever your religion from providence. Your exercises, your ups and your downs, your feelings of elation, your feelings of depression, connected with circumstances; and these, God uses. When circumstances are adverse, then we are told to consider; in the day of prosperity, be joyful. "God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him". (Ecclesiastes 7 v 14) O, when the Lord deals with a child of His in circumstances! Abraham had solemn circumstances; long delays on the part of God which the devil would make him believe were really a forgetfulness of God of His promise. David was appointed to the kingdom, to the throne of Israel. Look at the years of persecution and affliction he had to endure. So tried was he at one time he said to Jonathan, his friend, "As the Lord liveth there is but a step between me and death". He never took that step. God preserved Him. The Apostle Paul said he only knew

this, with respect to God's leadings, that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city, and you will find, more or less distinctly, that some affliction awaits you in the holy, wise providence of God. Have faith in Him. What has faith to do with troubles? This. When a kind of death comes, it is that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raiseth the dead. When the rod is laid on, then it is faith's business to say, help me to endure it, for the Spirit says: If we endure chastening God dealeth with us as with sons. And when providence is changing from light to darkness, from ease to trouble, from comfort to misery, what then? A kind of death comes. "Trust in the Lord for ever", He says, "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". You have this to do - faith has this to do - to trust the wisdom of God. He can bring to pass what is impossible to nature. You take Asa, that good king. A numberless multitude came against him; 300 chariots, a thousand thousand soldiers, and so on. What did Asa do? By faith he went to God. "Lord, it is nothing with Thee" he said "to help, whether with many or with them that have no power: help us O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude." Have you faith? Then it will tell you where to go with your troubles. It will tell you to wait on God. "My soul wait thou only upon God for from Him cometh my salvation". Faith will say, "Unto Thee O Lord do I lift up my soul". A waiting faith is a God-honouring faith, a soul sustaining faith, and, in the issue, a comforting faith. "We have waited for Thy salvation O Lord." Good Jacob said so on his death bed. "I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord."

Have faith in God who is the God of patience and consolation. A God of patience! What a contrast to an impatient believer. What a rebuke it is to the soul, when guided by the Spirit, to meditate on the God of patience. Have not some of you said- I have - "It is time for Thee Lord to work". Christ said to His disciples "Your time is always ready; My time is not yet". O, the inquisitiveness of our flesh. Forward and impatient, Peter said to Christ about John "What shall this man do?" You may say, what is to be the issue of this? And O how ready, painfully, wickedly ready, flesh is to say, it is no use, no good. Says Paul to the Romans: Now the God of all patience and consolation which is in Christ help you, give you faith to wait on Him, to trust Him. "He will not deceive you though you hardly of Him

deem." My brethren, faith has to do with God. Flesh lives or dies according to appearances and the older we get. Under the teaching and guidance of the Holy Ghost this comes to pass, to trust the God of patience and there is consolation in this; it is a great comfort when you can look to Him; there is consolation in it when you can believe in Him who is all wise and all good and full of infinite compassion and patience. He bears with us; bless His Name He bears with us and He hastens His work in His own time. "I the Lord will hasten it in His time". Look, for instance at this, the generations, the years, the ages God took to write the Scriptures; the infinite goodness that God laid up in Christ in Eternity and revealed so late after the creation of the world. In no hurry, and we are in a great hurry. Well, may the Lord help us to believe in the God of patience.

And next, have faith in the immutable God. Immutability is a perfection of Deity. If God could change, He could die. No change in Him; "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Perhaps you had some intimation of His good-will in some particular thing and providence contradicts that expectation. Matters arise, circumstances are born which say that expectation was vanity. If God gave it to you it will live and your faith will go to His immutability. "I am the Lord, I change not". "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever". It is faith's life, it is faith's business, to hang on an immutable God, immutable in all regards as they respect us; immutable in His mind. "He is of one mind and who can turn Him?" He changes His manner, He changes His dealings with His people. One day He smiles; another day He frowns; another day He smiles and blesses and comforts. All through He is the same God; the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. We sing occasionally

My soul through many changes goes
His love no variation knows

Good Erskine writes: "What thou findest Him at thy best, He's at thy worst the same". Immutable in His promises. "All the promises of God are in Him yea and in Him amen, to the glory of God by us." O but it is a difficult thing to believe here; do not envy people who find it easy to believe. The people who find it easy to believe find it easy to be infidels. The people who find it difficult to believe are

people who turn to God. "I believe; Lord help Thou mine unbelief". Look on me and grant me an increase of faith. "Lord increase our faith". He gives tokens of His immutability over and over again. He repeats promises; He lets them down from time to time in new light, life and unction, and faith lays hold of them afresh. He gives tokens of His goodness in His immutability, and says: How long will it be ere ye believe Me?" Well, dear friends, this immutability is a pillow; you can rest your head on it; it wont deceive you, cannot deceive you. If you can trust a promising God, God will honour that trust. "They that honour Me I will honour", and if you can honour Him when you are in the dust, and on the dunghill; if you can glorify Him by an act of faith in the valley and in the fire and in the water; He will honour that faith. They that honour Him by believing in Him when there seems to be nothing to believe, when there seems to be just that, to give up everything, then God will honour them. If you, in your afflictions, can care for His honour, that is to say, believe that He changes not; that what He said to you He will do; that what He promised to give you, He will give; that what He promised when He promised to sustain you, He will do it; He will honour that faith. O but it is no easy thing. No, it is no easy thing. The flesh will dispute it, the devil will deny it, unbelief, that inveterate foe of your soul, will say, it is no use hanging about God; there is no help for you in Him. Yea, sometimes that devil and unbelief will unite to say in your heart, "There is no God". That will touch the atheism of nature, fallen nature. Then, then living faith created by God in the heart, sustained by the Holy Spirit's secret operations and communications of grace, will say: I believe in God. A believer is a believer and an infidel. A believer is a holy person and a polluted sinner. A believer cleaves to God when He hides Himself; waits on God when He hides Himself. "I will wait for the Lord who hideth Himself from the house of Israel". "Have faith in God".

One word in conclusion, have faith in Him who has provided and built a city; mansions in that city. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also". "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me". O, but says reason, where is He? Where the flesh cannot come. The devil says, where is it? Where the

devil cannot come; but God reveals it. "I go to prepare a place for you", therefore "let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me." This faith is a wonderful grace; it baffles, in a sense, all attempts at description, it is so marvellous; a spirit of credence, living in the soul like, as I think Romaine says, a torch kept alive in a tempestuous sea, now and again nourished up by the gospel. The blessed flesh of Jesus received and His precious blood applied will nourish faith, strengthen it and enable it to go forward. O, but we do want some props. Gideon must go with 300 not 20,000 and you have to go with just that, that God has said it. Ah, one says, that is a hard life. It is a good life, and I believe if it were put to you, whether you would like and choose to live on sense and reason or to live on God by a naked faith unpropped, unsupported, uncorroborated by any circumstances, or at times by any good feeling - you understand me; unsupported by good feeling, but just a naked trust, a hanging on God, a hankering after Him, hungering and thirsting and believing that one day what He has set your heart on He will give you - that, in my judgment, is a God-honouring, a soul-saving faith. It gives union to Christ; it gives warm affections to God; it brings honour to His great and holy Name. I believe in God. This is overcoming. Ah, we pray sometimes. O, for an overcoming faith. I cannot preach a faith without conflict; I know what conflict is and the difficulties of believing; the devils that oppose it, the reason that opposes it, circumstances which oppose it, but

It lives and labours under load
Though damped, it never dies

Leaves may languish, fruit decrease

The rooted stock shall still remain

Look at the stock, my friends. "Hast thou faith?" O, sinner, "Hast thou faith?" One day last week, in trouble, God was pleased to give me this faith in exercise and I could say, and did say, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He honoured it. If you can trust Him He will bless you. If you can cast a case on Him, He will take it up. If you can bring a want to Him, He will

supply it. If you can bring a lost soul to Him He will save it. "Be it unto you even as you will": that is His Word to a believer, a brave believer, an overcoming believer. "Lord, the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master's table". "Have faith in God". Do not have faith in yourself. The man of God who, at any time, has faith in himself, will find destruction coming, death coming. "That he may not trust in himself but in God who raiseth the dead". I have got some believers here, I do believe, and you find it difficult to be a believer do you not? O, if I could but believe; could we but believe, then all would easy be. Well that looks like a contradiction. No it was easy to Abraham at that moment to believe, and this faith which is in the heart labouring and struggling to enter into rest sometimes does enter into it sweetly. There are matters and things accompanying faith which I am not able to enter upon except just to name one or two in conclusion. If you believe you worship God. Every believer by actions of faith, which stands in the power of God, worships God, the only Object of worship. The soul prostrates itself before His holy footstool, takes a bad case, a doubtful case, an evil case, a troublesome case, a perplexing case; it takes the cases to God in holy worship. Sometimes a very wonderful confidence accompanies the movement of faith in the soul; you believe and receive the things you ask for. If, says Christ, you believe what you desire, it shall be given you. I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them. And there sometimes is such a powerful sense of help and unction in prayer that the sinner says, I shall get what I ask for; holy confidence. Accompanying this faith is humility; no man can be proud while faith is in exercise. He lies low, very low; "Who am but dust and ashes" is his feeling, even as it was the feeling of Abraham. "Who am but dust and ashes". "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God" said Peter to the Church of God, and surely every believer understands that in some measure. Love accompanies this faith, sweet love, love to God. "I love the Lord" says a believer, "because He hath heard my voice and my supplications". And love to the Church also; you cannot love God and not love His people. "Whosoever loveth Him that begat loveth Him that is begotten of Him". What a sweet feeling it is when you feel you love the saints of God; to love Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the fathers and the prophets and the martyrs. Looking up, as it were to heaven, you see them by

faith, believe they are there, and love them; love them in holy Scripture. Another thing that accompanies faith is a cleaving to the Word of God, this divine Book, inspired, infallible, incapable of passing away unfulfilled. Faith holds fast to this. "Hold fast the form of sound words." These things more or less distinctly accompany faith. When faith is in exercise, then also love is there, and hope is there. May the Lord give us to have this faith. "Have faith in God". And if what I have spoken today should be the means of helping any of you believers to hang to this, to hanker after, believe in God, to cleave to Him, it will not have been in vain that I have spoken.

AMEN.