

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday 18 July 1934

Text: Proverbs 27 v 18

"Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof:
so he that waiteth on his master shall
be honoured"

"Whoso keepeth the fig tree", not merely the owner, but the man who watches it, prunes it, takes care of it. If there be signs of decay or disease, he looks after it; it is his business, it is his anxious care for on that depends, if not entirely, yet much of his sustenance. Whoso keepeth the fig tree in this sense, shall eat the fruit thereof. It shall be his delight, his nourishment, his wealth, and the inference, the teaching drawn from this beautiful word is this - "So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured." Not the sluggard, who, lying on his bed of idleness, thinks it too much to take his hand from his bosom and convey food to his mouth, who lazily says, a little more sleep and a little more slumber, and so his poverty comes like an armed man as one that travelleth.

He that waiteth on his master. First a word on the master. Christ instructs His people not to call any man master for He alone is Master of His house. He that built all things is God and this divine Son and Master takes care of His house and will have His household watched. He is the divine Master and the house and everything connected with it, He is the author of. It is a great thing to have a little faith that makes Christ real. We do well to examine ourselves on this point, whether God has ever made Himself real to us. Not an idea, not something we imagine, nor yet the religion that is attainable by considering the works of creation. What may be known of God therein is before every man's eye, and the man who does not see God in those works is wilfully blind, and unutterably guilty of infidelity. The Evolutionist will one day know whom he cast out of his reckoning. A man with a natural religion believes that there is

a God, a directing mind and powerful hand in the work of creation but though this master of the whole world be thus known by some, there is yet a sense in which He is known far differently and above this natural knowledge. Washing the disciples feet, He said, if I your Master have done this, take a lesson from it. He is the divine Master of His people. The house is built by Him, the laws of the house emanate from Him. The house is built on the top of the mountains and nations of poor, guilty sinners flow to Him, and they say - Let us go to the top of the mountain, to the house of the Lord which is built there and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His laws and in His paths. This divine Master has given in His house doctrine, invitation, promise, and precept, all of which we are to observe. No man, no christian man, is to be a law to himself. There is a great and glorious Master in heaven who rules with love, who reigns in mercy, who watches over His people in a special way. Even in providence, all things are in His hand. Well, it is wonderful to see by faith this Master. It was said by some of old "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write Jesus of Nazareth." Well if we can say that really we are very highly favoured people. Erskine asks

Dost mind the place, the spot of land
Where Jesus did thee meet?

Do you remember a room, a lane, a hedge behind which you were, the counter at which you were sitting, the bed on which you were lying, the table at which you were with your family, when Jesus Christ came, when you saw Him, when you worshipped Him and loved Him. And if the question had been asked concerning Him - Whom do men say that He, the Son of Man, is? - you would have said He is the Christ promised by God in Genesis, prophesied by Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, Jesus the Son of God. And if one should say, how do you know that? you would say I cannot explain it but there did come a light, a living light into my heart and I saw what I never can express, I saw the Son of God. He became Lord in my heart, He became Master over my spirit, and my circumstances. I cast my never dying soul into His gracious arms. I fell at the foot of the cross; I found Him to be more

precious to me than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir. All things to me were in my measure, what all things were to Paul, in his greater measure, loss, dung, dross, that I may win Him and this is the Master, Jesus; the Master, kind, tender, compassionate, wisdom itself, understanding itself, ruling in heaven and earth, angels, authorities and powers being made subject to Him. And I, a vile sinner, have been, by the gospel, made subject to Him and so some of you have learned that scripture experimentally, even if you have never thought about it in connection with this, your experience - "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Was it not so just then? You had not a thought of helping in your salvation. You had not a thought against Him as far as you could then feel and discover. He was to you the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. O the peace, the happiness brought by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Life, and this is the Master. May the Holy Spirit reveal Him and glorify Him in this congregation so that we, in our hearts, may weep to the praise of the mercy we have found and bow before Him and give Him our hearts, according to His gracious invitation, "My son give Me thine heart".

Waiteth, or, as the word may be, watcheth, observeth. He that thus waiteth on his Master shall be honoured. Well do you watch for Him? "Blessed is the man that watcheth at my gates" where My counsels are, where I am wisdom in the judgment and heart and affection of My people that watch for Me when I come to these gates and communicate to those who are sitting there. It is written in the Psalms - "They have seen Thy goings O God, even Thy goings in the sanctuary". Take an example of this, Asaph, foolish, a reasoner, gathering before his mental eye the differences in God's providence, dealing out trouble to His favourites, and comforts to His enemies, and gathering all these circumstances, he said I cannot understand them. If I talk about it before Thy people I shall offend them. I am perplexed. And so he remained and would have remained till his dying moment,

had not God taken hold of him and conducted him into the sanctuary of God. There He dwelleth between the cherubims; there He sits in mercy; there, and from thence, He communicates goodness. He took Asaph into this sanctuary and there Asaph got lessons, got instruction sealed on his heart. Ah he saw himself as a beast. You will never know yourself so well as when you are near the Lord Jesus. Your life is never so vile in your own eyes as when you are near Him. You never hate yourself and your sins so much as when you are at the foot of the cross. Asaph got that teaching. Oh he said I am as a beast before Thee. I have reasoned, I have reckoned, and I have become confused and have not known where I have been. Now I know, I know I am a fool. I know I have been as a beast without understanding. Now I know also that I am continually with Thee. Thou, in my wandering moments, and in my foolish reasonings, Thou hast been pleased to hold me up, and, while the wicked are set in slippery places, my feet have been kept. I am no better than the worst, but Thou hast dealt more kindly with me than with others.

Wait on this Master, watch His going in two places. Wait on Him in two places. First in your own hearts. You have got enemies, sins innumerable and powerful. You have had a victory here and a victory there by grace. You now have to go to Him again with some enemies. Lord shall I go up? Wilt Thou help me? He says do not go up. Go to the mulberry trees, and when thou hearest a sound thereof then move. Do you ever hear the motions of the Holy Ghost in your hearts? Does He sometimes, as it were, say with some distinctness of motion, pray. Does He sometimes move you to cast your soul by precious faith into His hands, believing, feeling "My times are in Thy hands?" The blessed motions of the Spirit of Christ upon the soul, you watch them. Sometimes you may find a very solemn rebuke for your unbelief. Ah, I can never say what that word has been in my heart "How long will it be ere ye believe Me?" I have brought you out of Egypt, I have brought you into the wilderness, I have allured you there. I have fed you, I have given you water to drink from the rock, I have given you the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace. I have given you to believe there is a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and now you are

fretting because things are not easy. Was ever a pilgrim told that his way should be easy? Did ever a soldier hear his captain say, you are not to see an enemy? No. Then watch the motions of the Spirit of Christ in your hearts. Ah when you are feeling weakness itself, the Spirit's motion may be "Trust in the Lord for ever for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". When you are foolish and know not which way to take, the Spirit may say "This is the way". Jesus Christ is the way, walk ye in Him. When your enmity rises, the Spirit's motion may say - God gave His Son out of love, and the Son out of love came, and the Spirit out of love has made Him known to you. Now you should love Him, give Him your heart, give Him your confidence, give Him all your trust. Watch for this blessed moving of the Spirit of God, and when you find that, follow it.

And the second place that I would name is providence. Children are very foolish and a wise Father has a rod for them. They should watch that. Unbelief, as soon as trouble comes, says this is against you, this is a sign of God's anger, this may lead you to destruction, and you are afraid. Who would not be afraid, when, giving credence to unbelief, he looks at every stroke and that rod that inflicts it as if it must be necessarily a sign of God's anger. See now if the affliction and some scriptures fit in one with the other, and watch the Master in His handiwork. Watch Him as He moves His gracious lips, into which grace was poured, and watch this word and see if it fits in with your trouble. My son. What is that? My son, whom I love I chasten. Every son I receive? I correct. Oh poor, tried child of God, think of it. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and correcteth every son whom He receiveth." Ah you say, if you knew my trouble you might think as I think about it. I should, if I were in that case and were under the power of unbelief. I have suffered from unbelief, and am often still suffering. I know what it is, but O, when the Spirit comes and moves and turns your eye, your faith to the Lord, to His faithful love, to His kindness in not letting you destroy yourself, then you say - here is my heart, here is my poor confidence, Lord take me, manage me, I am unmanageable to myself. Manage my matters, and do not let me attempt to manage them myself. Whoso waiteth on this Master in respect of his

providence, in respect of the trials that come, in respect of the perplexities that arise out of circumstances, waiteth upon Him, waiteth till He shall speak, till He shall work, till He shall open a door that no man can shut. Observe His ways here, you will find, as you observe God's providence, you will never lack a providence to observe. So it has been well said

Now what is said of this watcher, waiter - "He shall be honoured." What is it for God to honour the wretch who only waits occasionally, and yet in the principle of faith is always watching? What is the honour? First of all it is an inward honour, and I would say it is a smile on the soul. There is a sinner confessing his sins and saying Lord I am not fit to live, and myself is so black to myself. I loathe myself and I loathe my life, the life of my heart, unseen by men. And while the sinner is thus engaged in loathing himself and confessing his sins, suddenly, I say suddenly, for it is so at times, there falls upon his afflicted spirit what I call a smile. It changes the scene at once. It does not make sin less loathsome, but it does give the sinner a realisation in a measure at least, of what it is to be washed. And the word of this divine Master is instructive and beautiful in the gospel of John. After Peter had made a strong objection to Christ washing his feet, Christ said, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me". O said Peter - Christ overcame him by that - wash not my feet only, but my hands and my head. Now Christ said - he that is washed in the washing of regeneration, needeth not save to wash his feet. If you have been washed by that blessed washing of regeneration, all you need in future is to have your feet washed, your walk corrected, your backslidings healed. Your misgivings and misjudging of God, these to be taken away. This, I apprehend, is having your feet washed. Jesus comes, and that is an honour. O the honour of being smiled on, the honour of having another cleansing, your backslidings healed. Who can express it? He shall be honoured. You never will pray one real Spirit given prayer and go into eternity without an answer. The bulk of prayer may have no answer and that may be a great blessing. Oh if God answered all our petitions what would become of us? But when the Spirit breathes a prayer that brings groaning into your heart, groaning

that you cannot utter, groaning that reaches heaven, enters into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth, that prayer, as I think GADSBY says, that prayer is surely heard. "Prayer indited by the Lord, the Lord will surely hear," and that is an honour. It is an honour when the conscience being again defiled, is cleansed, when again it pleases God to take away the bar that guilt made and set up between His divine majesty and your soul. Look for that. One said "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord for it is great". Ah the forgiveness of sins is a wonderful blessing. It is an honour when it pleases the Lord Jesus to say to you "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". You have asked My guidance. I will guide thee with mine eye, and I will afterward receive you to glory. And you will say with Him who is your Master who said "I will bless the Lord who hath given Me counsel." And what is the counsel that Christ has given you? Trust Me, He said, trust Me, leave your soul and your body and your family, and your troubles, leave them all with Me. On My shoulder is the government. We are fools my friends. We do not know how to manage matters. But when the Lord honours a child, a praying child of His with counsel, then there is an honour. "Trust in the Lord for ever" is His counsel "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength".

He shall be honoured. Men may despise him, he may have trouble in his family because of his religion, but when in his room alone with God he gets a guiding word, a counsel spoken on his heart, then he has got an honour the world knows nothing about. Oh he says to himself, I have got a friend in heaven. He may meet with Richard Dore's life and experience, when he comes to that part of it that Richard Dore walked at 6 o'clock in the morning to his work in London. Suddenly is the Lord with him, and he stopped and said - there is a Man in heaven who loves me and whom I love." What an honour. O think of it. A Man whom I love - you will never see Him without loving Him - and who loves me. He had been touched, Richard Dore, and the good man did not know it, and now the time has come when he knows it and he said He loves me and I love Him. That was an honour. Another honour is this, that the Holy Ghost is given. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children how much more shall

your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Do you ask for this blessing? You will never get on well without Him. Your souls will never be healthy without Him. You will never realise union to Christ without the Spirit. You will never walk in wisdom's ways without the Spirit. He says My Father will give you the Spirit if you ask Him. Turn aside, hungry soul, turn aside O sinner panting for the Spirit, and ask this great blessing, the gift of the Holy Ghost. You have got a bad temper. He can subdue it. You have got a hasty spirit, and often speak bitter words in great haste to your great shame, He can manage you. You have got an unbelieving heart and do not know how to live sometimes. He can subdue that iniquity. Everything concerning the soul, everything concerning its interest in this life and in the life to come, the Holy Spirit gives. He rules, He teaches, He controls, He manages. I wish we here, as a poor little congregation of sinners, might know more of this divine Spirit dwelling in us. "Know ye not" said Paul to the Corinthian church, "that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you and ye are not your own". May the Holy Ghost be with us and what a mercy it will be if He would come to some who are dead in trespasses and sins and quicken them. Oh if I might yet have some sons and daughters more than I have, in that respect; that God would quicken some of you and also grant seals to the ministry.

As the man, the keeper, the owner of the fig tree eats the fruit of it, enjoys the fruit of his labour, and says I did not labour in vain on those frosty days; I did not labour in vain, when the rain was heavy and I got wet through; now I have got the fruit; so a sinner may say, I was not allowed to faint in the day of adversity, and when the winter was on me I was enabled to labour before God. When the rain was heavy, still God helped me to go on, and I have got an answer, an answer in my conscience, an answer in my circumstances, an answer in my heart, and God is good, He is good. This is the testimony of one who has been enabled to watch. "Watch, watch and be sober". The word of Christ is "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation."

We have not come to one spot. We must come to a dying bed.

Do you ever pray about it? I think I can say honestly now, no day passes over my head when I am not concerned about my end. It is very near to me as, of course, you know. It must be. What about that? Philpot somewhere says, if you wish for thorns in your dying pillow, live carelessly. I have often feared that I have prepared thorns for my dying pillow. I have walked very foolishly. But there is One who can make it soft as downy pillows are. One who can take every accusation from the conscience and every thorn, richly deserved, from the pillow. Watch for this, pray for this. If we consider our latter end, it is well. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom". What is that? Watching at Christ's door, waiting at His gates. Applying your heart to wisdom is praying, waiting on God, looking to Christ, hanging about Him, hungering after Him, and entreating the Holy Ghost to reveal Him in you. And what will the honour be? In my late illness I was favoured for some days. The Lord was with me and I could only say, do take me home that I may never sin again. But I am here. O but I did want a good death bed. It wont make any real difference to a saint whether he dies in the dark or in the light, but when he considers matters, O he says, Lord do not let me die in the dark. We must needs die. May we die in the Lord. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, for henceforth they do rest from their labours and their works do follow them." What next? Well they shall be honoured with an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. May that be in store for us. May you who may not be concerned about your souls be brought into a real concern by the washing of regeneration. May those of us who are born again have power given to us to wait on this divine person, this heavenly master, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may yet receive the blessed word "They shall be honoured."

AMEN.