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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel  
Brighton on Wednesday Evening 19th September 1928

TEXT: PSALM 119 verse 117

"Hold Thou Me up and I shall be safe and I will have  
respect unto Thy statutes continually"

With respect to the church of God there are two outstanding facts in the scriptures, first that she has always been small. "The Lord" said Moses to Israel, "The Lord did not love you nor choose you because you were greater in number than all the people, for ye were the fewest of all people" "Fear not little flock" Israel on one occasion of great strait and necessity was like two little flocks of kids, and their enemies filled the whole of the country. On the day of Pentecost the church numbered 120, and though, on that remarkable day, 3000 souls were added, still comparatively, how small the church was then and though, after that day, and for some time, great prosperity attended the ministry of the gospel, comparatively, the church was very small. It is so to-day.

And the second outstanding fact in Holy Scripture is this, that this poor little church of God has always been weak, unable to stand, unequal to warfare, impatient of pilgrimage, ignorant, very ignorant of God, frequently tired of religion, sometimes ready to go away from God to selfishly, willfully walk in your own ways. O how weak the church of God has always been. In her best days there were hypocrites in her midst. In Apostolic days when truth was preached, then heresies came and the church has always been weak, and these two facts make room for a third outstanding truth, namely, that this little church, this weak, wayward church has always had a faithful Friend, an Almighty Defender, a wondrous Protector, an infallible Guide, an

exhaustless supply. She has the same to-day. One of the signs of grace is a sense of weakness, and inability to stand. Some realisation of the enemies' strength and very frequently an exaggerated view of the enemies' strength, but that is sanctified for it brings the feeble creature to say "Hold Thou Me up", and it brings her within the promise "The battle is not yours, God shall fight for you" and to be inside any gospel promise is an amazing mercy. The gates of hell shall not prevail against a feeble soul, a feeble church.

This prayer, which I have read for a text, followed by a profession of what should be in the event of being held up, will be and is both the experience and the profession of every child of God more or less distinctly. To be enabled to walk honourably, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called is a very great blessing. To fight the good fight of faith is very arduous and to sense and reason very dangerous and very unequal. To stare the cross in the face, as Rutherford says, seven times and not throw it down, much grace is needed. To hold fast what you have got, you need the power of God who gave it to you to help you to hold it fast. Hold fast that which Thou already hast that no man take they crown. If you never feel as if it is being so to speak snatched away from you, it is to be feared it is not of much worth, for the devil does not try people who have not much treasure. If you have got something from heaven in your heart the devil will try to get it away from you.

Hold Thou me up as a poor sinner. One may say I shall never lose a sense of that. You will, if the Lord does not keep it alive in you. Such is the pride of nature, such is the objection and prejudice of a sinner against being a sinner as long as he lives, that if not kept awake and sensible of his sinnership and his disposition to sin and the power of indwelling sin making him understand painfully what Paul said "the good that I would I do not and the evil I would not that I do", I say that if that be not kept alive

by the Holy Ghost, there is a readiness in us to give it up. What, to be a sinner always? What never to lose the sense of it? Well one may say how could I rejoice? You could weep, and sing, be sad, and hope, but you must be under the Spirit's teaching to know what union there can be between such opposites and how they can dwell in the same heart. Rejoice and be ashamed. Hart knew and some of us also know it.

Hold Thou me up that I may never, never feel independent of Christ. Of course, I shall never be independent of Him. I did not say that, I said, feeling dependence. We are dependent whether we will or no. Every creature of God is dependent. The beast of the field and the smallest creature that God has made is dependent on Him, but to feel that dependence, belongs to the Lord's people. When you mean to do a thing and that intention keeps you from praying as to whether God will have you do it, is not that being independent or feeling it? Is not that choosing your own way? O how I have suffered from this and perhaps some of you may understand it. We need to be held up with a sense of our dependence on God. To believe that it is in Him we live, and move, and have our being. To believe that the hidden man of the heart, being a creature, created by the Holy Ghost, just is the same, spiritually living and moving, and having its heavenly being in the Lord Jesus. This is a great thing in grace, if you have attained to a sense of dependence, to such a sense of it as to make you understand what an old minister said when I was a young man and was hearing him, and I could not understand it then. He said this "I have lived to be afraid of taking my hat and walking into the street without the Lord". Well one says, surely that is a great exaggeration. If you live long enough you will learn the truth of it, that you are never safe but as you are enabled to ask the Lord to be with you and guide you and go with you at all times and in all things. O sinner, do not act as if you were independent. If I could tell you some of my things you would see the damage that an

independent spirit has wrought. Men may not see it but you will feel it as God is with you, if you walk independently. It is a great thing to be able to say in your heart this word honestly "Hold Thou me up" Lord do not let me act as if I were my own. Ah it is a great thing to know that you are not your own. Twice have I heard God's voice saying that to me. "Ye are not your own" and twice in my life I have said to Him, then do not let me act as if I were. Between what you profess and what you do, there may be a great difference, but to be consistent in your heart, to live what you say in your confessions, is a great matter. Hold Thou me up. You may, after a sleep, go to the top of your house and fall into some dreadful sin. If David had had grace at that terrible hour to say "Lord do keep me" it would have been wonderful, but he did not want the Lord then, and so he fell as it were from the top of his house into a hell, and a sorrow that never left him. Mind how you move. Be careful. If Peter had had a sense of his weakness and dependence he would not have said "Lord I will go to prison with Thee" and "I will die with Thee". He would not have contradicted the Lord who said "You will deny Me" but he would have said "Lord I am too weak to stand and I have not grace to stand the shock of temptation, do give me as much as I shall want" He learned painfully his dependence. You will have to learn. You will have to enter into this part of the kingdom of God by painful experience. O be careful. Hold Thou me up.

I think I got this word the other morning and it became my prayer and is "Hold Thou me up" Suppose you are near your grave and God should leave you, then you will fall some way. The last step will be as dependent as the first step. Every step, every step, every breath, every movement, every motion of your will, of your mind, you will learn in respect of each one, and all that you are dependent. If God takes the pains to teach you, you will thank Him one day that He did not let you have your own way. O the kindness of God to bring discipline to bear upon us. Hold Thou me up in a

sense of my dependence in everything. That is a great word "Ye are not your own". "No man" in another place, the Holy Ghost says by Paul "liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. Whether we live, therefore, or whether we die, we are the Lords. May the Lord work that out in our experience. It is pleasant perhaps to read it, and pleasant perhaps to say, well I am among the people to whom that is spoken, but to have it wrought in your heart and life, that is another matter.

Hold Thou me up in faith. Faith is the life of God, deep in the heart it lies, it lives and labours under load, though damped, it never dies. Faith has an object. Faith has God for its object. God, in the law, believed in, is a terror. God, in Christ, believed in, is a comfort" Thither the soul goes running to Him again and again, finding the name of the Lord to be a strong tower. Faith in the blood of Christ will be a solid ground for you to stand on; a strong plea for you to make; an overcoming argument for you to use in the court of heaven. O that blessed faith that is called the faith of God's elect, because nobody else has it. Faith in the bleeding Lamb, in the justifying robe of Christ's righteousness. Faith in His intercession, in His wisdom, in His power, in His goodness, in His love, in His faithfulness, O what a blessing it is, yet if you have faith the devil will try to kill it. The strong limb of the old man, as Philpot speaks of unbelief, will try to overcome it. Troubles may again and again test it, and you will be sorely put to it to believe in God. You may say - I always believe in Him. If you always believe in Him rightly, you are a favoured person, but there is in Holy Scripture, the trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire. The trial of faith is precious as well as the grace of faith. The trial of it, that proves it. That proves it to be right. O what a great thing if you can say now I had a trouble, it was a fire and I thought I should be burnt and ruined, but that trouble proved to me that my faith was real. Abraham's faith was

proved. He had it and God tempted him, tried him, tried his faith and his faith stood the test. If you have real faith, God will put it to some trial. It may be a trial that your flesh very much resents but that faith will stand. You can easily imagine the test, the sore test it was to Abraham when God tempted him. O but faith stood. Said the Lord to Peter "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" Do not talk of faith if you have never had your faith tried, but if you have had your faith tried and found it was a good faith, then you may walk as Paul said "Let every man prove his own work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself and not another. You will rejoice if you prove your faith to be right. An untried faith is an uncertain faith. Who would trust it? If a railway is built, who would travel upon it before it had the government test put to it? The government has a test and it puts that test to the railway, and then it gives, so to speak, the certificate; now that may be run upon. See if your faith will stand. Has it stood anything? Hold Thou me up. See what David's faith stood, when in his great trouble, they took the Ark of God out of its proper place to him, a fugitive. At that moment his faith stood the test; he said carry back the Ark of God into the city; let that be in its right place, whatever becomes of me. "Carry back the Ark of God into the city. If the Lord take pleasure in me He will bring me again and I shall see both it and His habitation, but if He say I have no pleasure in thee, behold here am I, let Him do what seemeth Him good". It was a great trial and test of his faith and his faith stood it. Well you may have a great trial to your faith, but God will keep it. He keeps the faith He works. He honours it. He honours His own faith. Hold Thou me up in faith. Well dear friends this blessed faith, it has to fight against hell in you; against many contradictions. Contradictions of science, falsely so called; contradictions of the devil's temptations; contradictions in providence, when instead of the Lord helping you, as you would wish, He seems to put blocks in the way to hinder you. Then I say you will need all the faith you have got. Help

me to believe, to credit contradictions, talk with Him one never sees; cry and groan beneath afflictions, yet to dread the thought of ease. This is to be a christian, a believer, and this may be in your heart as a very severe struggle sometimes. You would fain get near Him and cannot; justify Him and yet are quarelling with Him, saying perhaps with your lips, He is right, He is right, and yet your heart saying He is not. O to hold Him fast. Dear friends He is good, and the testimony of the Psalmist is this - The goodness of the Lord endureth continually. There is no end to it and yet you have got perhaps in your feelings to the end of your faith, the ends of the earth and you may say I am afraid of God's tokens. Some of His providences are so solemn you are afraid of them as if they are tokens of displeasure, as if He is against you. Now faith in such a case stands and says God is right. His work is perfect. There is no unrighteousness in Him. Faith 'tis a precious grace.

Hold Thou me up in this great thing, this - to believe in God. Now faith has a very good sight, and you see what it was in that particular in Moses. "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." What a contradiction, yet what a truth, and in Moses what Paul said by the Holy Ghost was true, faith was in him the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and he again understood what the Holy Ghost inspired Paul to write much later "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen". You see your mortifications; you see your pride and feel what damage it may do you. You see your strong self-will (O I have seen mine) and are afraid into what hurtful things it may drive you. You see these things. Now if you have got faith to look to Christ, on His blood, His wisdom, His power, His goodness, His promise, then you look on unseen things and that will take your eye off the seen things. "While we look not at the things which are

seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal". And faith sees these eternal things sometimes in the light of the Spirit's teaching. You see this "We know that the Son of God is come" You see this "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath the heart of man conceived the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" and we see them. Did you ever see a promise in a dark cloud. Christ in a solemn, contrary providence. Christ in the wilderness. Christ on a dark and stormy night, coming to you on the fourth watch when you thought He would not come. What an amazing thing. Paul saw this Christ when he knew and was seeing at that very moment the ship being broken to pieces. He saw this Christ of God. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible. This is what faith does, but faith is ready to give way sometimes. It becomes feeble, very feeble and you may say I go forward but God is not there. I go backward but I cannot perceive Him. On the left-hand where He doth work, and on the right-hand He hideth himself. Well then, what did faith do then? "O" said the believer then "He knoweth the way that I take" And what was the way Job took then? This was his way "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat" O that I could pray. My stroke is so heavy; my groanings do not utter it all - cannot. "O that I knew where I might find Him" "Lord" you may say "my family trouble is more than I can bear. My difficulties stare me in the face and Thou hast hid Thyself. O that I knew where I might find Thee". The church wanted Him in a dark night, and so she rose from her bed and sought Him. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth." Then she got out and went through the streets of the city. If you really want Him, faith in your heart will say - now you must go here, go to the Bible, go to the throne of grace, and go to the ministry God has given to you and see if you can find Him. In every way that God has in His holy providence opened to you, faith will say "Now I must seek the



Lord."Hold Thou me up in this. The gates of hell are against faith more than anything else because, if once this faith can be broken, there is nothing left. O but faith holds her own really because strengthened. Bunyan saw in the Interpreter's house a fire, and he saw one pouring water on it, and wondered why the water didn't quench the fire. His wonder ceased when he was taken to the backside of the fire-place and there saw one pouring oil upon it. The grace of Christ is stronger than the water of the devil. O to be a believer. O to be a believer. A believer dies and goes to heaven, and his tried faith is honoured and has a sweet death when the open vision comes and the weary veil of the flesh and the trials of faith, and the temptations of the devil, all cease and the sinner (his happy spirit) enters into perfect rest. Well believer, do not expect a smooth way, but you may plead one promise "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" and you may look for what is promised there - shoes of iron and brass, an equipment suitable and equal to the position.

Hold Thou me up in love. Love to Jesus Christ and His, fixes the heart above. What an awful thing it is not to love Christ. If a man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha, that is let him be accursed, but love is just like faith, a tried grace. It was tried in John the Baptist. The prison tried it, but I think the silence of Christ tried it the most for when he said to Christ "Art Thou He that should come or look we for another" he did not complain of the prison, he only complained of the silence. You may say sometimes I could bear my trouble if He would but speak to me. That is the worst of all things, the silence of Christ. Some of you can believe what I say and I know it for myself. O when Christ does not speak. When you say "Be not silent to me" He is silent perhaps in providence -nothing exercising you. Silent in the scriptures -nothing speaking to you. Silent at the throne of grace -not responding to your prayers and silent in the ministry. He may dry it up to you for a time for .

chastisement. Yes, He may chastise you by drying up the ministry and you may say, what has come to it, and for a time you may blame it, till God speaks to you. O, but when the Lord tries love, it is very solemn. When every passion of your fallen nature would rise up in hatred. When you would contradict Him in all His ways and when the power of sin in you is as strong as ever, though not allowed to break out, O what a trial to love. Love shall still remain. It shall still remain and if in the midst of the trouble Christ were to say to you, will you go away as many have done, that would awaken love in moment and you would say "Entreat me not to leave Thee. Let me not leave Thy Name, and Thy throne, and Thy word, and Thy blood and Thy righteousness". What a hell would be where Christ is not at all. What a heaven there is then when He comes and what love is felt when He comes. "Hold Thou me up" What a mercy it is to love the Lord. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He is the object of love. He is worthy of love. He is infinitely above love, and yet He says He will be loved and loves to be loved, and He has a jealousy in His heart against the want of love which His people often manifest. I wish I never manifested a lack of love to Him. His jealousy is great, though I have thanked Him for His jealousy. I am glad He is jealous, but it is a wonder of His condescension to be jealous of a sinner's love, but He is jealous of it and you will know it if you let Him go, that is if you turn away from Him for a time and go in your own way without love to Him. He will let you know it and you will say "Lord I am sorry" Sweet repentance will return and love will spring up again. Hold Thou me up in love. Much could be said about this.

Now in the next place, hold Thou me up in a consistency of life. May my walk be consistent with my profession. It is a great thing when it is impossible for anyone truly to say "Now that person's conduct contradicts his profession. It is an awful thing when it is possible for that to be said. Look and see if you walk consistently. Let your yea

be yea, and your nay, nay. Abstain from the very appearance of evil. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Soldiers, be loyal, servants obey, children honour your fathers. As these precepts are spoken in the scriptures, may they be made over to us so as that we may walk before the Lord. For a church to be consistent is a great mercy. For an individual person to be consistent is a great mercy. Remember the word of God. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness. Think of it. There is not a relationship in life sustained by the people of God to which God has not spoken in His word, and to make a breach in any of these relationships is to dishonour the profession that is made. Think of it. Every relationship, every relationship spoken to. Dear friends, here we are before God. I have thought of these things to-day as in His sight, and this has been with respect to myself and is with respect to myself, a petition Hold me up. Lord do not let me go wrong. The heresies of my nature and of your nature, the secret faults of our hearts, who can understand? It is a question in the Psalms who can understand his errors, cleanse Thou me from secret faults. You do not know what is in your heart but as it is opened by the teaching of the Spirit and then to be enabled to go before God, solemnly feeling that there is not a sin done in this world by any infidel or reprobate or vile living person, the seed and root of which you have in your own heart, this is very solemn, and if the Lord shows it you, with grace you will say "O what a humbling truth it is". Here is a vile sinner made a saint. Here is a wicked person made whole and enabled to live a holy life. Here is a person with error in his nature, taught the truth and enabled to hold the truth fast and bless God for it. Is not it wonderful to think that some poor people here, with all the wickedness of their nature, God helps them to live before Him and gives them a lively hope of heaven. This is an amazing mercy. I hope I shall get to heaven one day but I have a hell of sin in my nature and I know it. I feel it. So do some of you.

Now this is the prayer then. I have said but two or three words about it. O the depth and extent of it. Hold Thou me up, a dependent creature. We shall not pray like this in heaven, but if we get there we shall be dependent on God. We are dependent and an independent creature is simply a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing existing as an independent creature. God only is independent. If we get to heaven we shall be creatures and therefore we shall be dependent. Will there be supplies sufficient? Why, listen my friends, listen, and the Lamb which is in the midst of them shall lead them to living fountains of waters and they shall thirst no more and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes. That did sparkle once in my eyes when I was feeling sure that I should be a creature through eternity. The Lamb, the blessed Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, in the midst of His glorious company, leading them to living fountains of water. Living fountains; wonderful emanations of love, and glory, ever coming from God satiating the soul, not wearying the soul, satiating them with an endless satisfaction, but one cannot speak of heaven. You must get there to know what it is, though I do believe that the very nature of heaven is entered into here just a little. When you get the Lord's presence and are holy and happy, when your conscience is pure and Jesus is your life, and all, you have got a little heaven, and it wont be a different heaven for substance when you get it, but it will be the same immeasurably better known, more sweetly, fully entered into and enjoyed.

Now said the Psalmist, then I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually. The word statutes and the word judgments and precepts and testimonies and law, these words all through this Psalm may be taken to mean the word of God and says the Psalmist -O Thou great God on whom I am dependent, hold me up. Hold my faith up and then I will look to the word, and I will have respect to it. I wont despise any part of it; the precepts of it, the

commandments of it. The commandments of the holy Apostles of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I will respect them all and try to obey Him in them and walk worthy of God. Do you ever feel this with respect to the Word of God. Do you ever say when you are in difficulties "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do" You may say in humble confession - I know what I want to do, but what wilt Thou have me to do." That is having respect unto the statutes of God. When you want Him to speak to you and say "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Now may the Lord open our hearts and ears and speak to us and teach us. Teach us as professors of His blessed name. Help us to cast our burdens and our souls and our cares on Him. Keep us as a church in His holy, clean fear. Forbid that we should walk in any error of doctrine, that we should walk in any false experiences and false lights and keep us from untoward practices among men. Pray for me. I pray for you. The Lord help us to labour together in word, in prayer, in faith, looking to Him to be supplied with all that grace that we need believing there is an exhaustless store in the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.