

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 11 December 1927

REVELATION 2 v 25

"But that which ye have already hold fast till
I come"

If God has been pleased, in the Scriptures, to address churches, as such; if He has been pleased to send distinct messages to churches by the pastors of such churches, ought not pastors today, if sent by Him to that office, to do that which we have before us? If holy Scripture only dealt with individuals, then it would be sufficient for ministers so to preach, but, seeing that Christ had seven churches in Asia, that He noticed them very particularly, minutely; that He took notice of what was good, and expressed approval of it; and observed what was wrong, and drew attention to it, and commanded repentance, adding threats in the event of no repentance being found; then surely it behoves every sent pastor to follow this great line of things. And if ever it was necessary, since the days when these seven letters were written by inspiration, that pastors should speak to churches as such, it is today. That is my opinion, and I feel - and I know you will let me say it - that it behoves me, in this day, at this time of my life, to speak to you as a church. One great difference between the days of this epistle and today, is this, that so far as the history of the church shows, people were born again, and brought from the temple of idols immediately into the church of God. And when application was made for membership, the applicants were very closely, and constantly instructed for a year, and then, if they were satisfactory at the end of that by examination, they were admitted into membership. It is very different today. We, as a small body of people, have, as I have reason to believe, and am thankful to believe, some in the congregation who have the life and fear of God in their souls, though they are not members of the church. I hope, if it please God, before I am taken away, to see them in the church rightly. But though they are not members of the church, but as they apparently fear the Lord, I shall, if I may, include them in the

observations I have to make this evening.

This church at Thyatira had much in it that was commendable, and for which Christ commended it. He never passes by any grace that He has given. He never forbears to acknowledge any good which He has imparted. If you, if we as a church, have any goodness in us as from heaven, the day is coming, if it has not arrived, when the Lord Jesus will acknowledge that. He commends His Own work. The church, as a church, is to be judged really, and only, by Himself. And yet there are signs, external, more or less distinct, in every church I suppose, by which the condition of the church may be judged according to the rule of the Word of God; not according to the judgement which a person may form without any notice of the Scripture rule, but according to the Scripture rule. There would be, in every true gospel church, certain things which the Lord has given, and which may be commended, which He Himself will commend.

To this church He says - The Son of God saith. To the angel, the pastor of the church, He says, write these things that are to follow, "saith the Son of God" - the eternal Son of God incarnate; Head of the church; King in His kingdom; Head in His Own house - "who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire" - no mistake in His search; no mistake, no error in His search; the gaze of omniscience is a certain gaze. I may have what you think is right; you may have what I think is right. What would those eyes discover if they were brought to bear upon us? Would they see faith in exercise? Would they see a hungry, parched soul, in all of you, professors, and members? Would they see a diligence to be in communion with Him at His footstool? Would they see a willingness to leave the world, and the ambitions, and the ways of nature? Would they see you sighing, praying, when you were not in the form of prayer? See you committing your way to God, and asking Him, whatever happens to you here, one thing of all others you want, and that is to be straight with Himself. He "who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass". You remember these attributes were given to Him in the first chapter. "Feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace". Would He burn anything up in us, were He to walk among us? "I know thy works". They are before Him. A church can be judged in two ways, as she stands in Christ, as she is complete in Him, and accepted in Him, united to

Him, living His life, wearing His righteousness, and walking in His sanctification, and this be without any knowledge on the part of men. He sees it. The church is to be judged by her works more or less external at least in their fruit. "I know thy works". God is not unrighteous to forget works done in faith. Thy labour of love, thy work of faith; He will never forget it. One work is, that the man, blessed with grace, the church, blessed with grace, leaves the world and goes after the Lord in a land that was not sown, in the wilderness, and He knows that work. I know thee. "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown". (Jeremiah 2 v 2). Is that how we are walking? Is that one of our works still? Do you come up out of the wilderness? Do you lean on the arm of your Beloved? And charity, love; which the Ephesian church had left. "Thou hast left thy first love". The church at Thyatira seems not to have done so, hence this acknowledgement of the charity which she was walking in toward His great Name. And service; serving Him with many tears, and temptations which befell the church of God. Serving Him by cleaving to Him. "The kingdom of God" - we are informed in the Romans - "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men". (Romans 14 v 17/18). Is that our service? And faith and patience. Patience always follows faith. If you commit your way to God by faith, you will patiently wait for Him. If you believe He will be with you to the end, you will patiently wait for Him. If you believe He has called you to walk in a certain path in providence, you will patiently walk in that path. Never divorce patience from faith. They are united; and if you see a person impatient in his ways, and steps, and life, you may judge that, if that person has faith, it is at a very low ebb. "And thy works, and the last to be more than the first". And this seems to point to a growth in grace in this church. That there had been really, and there was really, at this moment, a growth in grace, in the works of godliness in this church. What then? Surely no fault can be found with a church in that state. We may very much misjudge. "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her

fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them which commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds". The bed of their pleasures shall be the bed of their anguish, and sorrow, and death. Wrong walking, wicked practices, will always bring, first, a discovery, and then a threat, and, then, if grace be not given with the space to repent, a killing of the adulteress, and her children, and of all who had commerce with her unto death. If we have not wrong things, if we have not wrong doctrine; if, as a church, we are kept from such evil practices, may we be thankful, but not secure. Do not say, We are in no danger. Do not say, We are secure. To say such things would show that danger, even that evil had already in some form, and measure, taken hold of us. The person who is secure, the church that is secure; you may depend upon it, in that security - if in no other way - are in danger. It is well to be on your watch-tower. It is a mercy to stand there, in your defensive place. "I will kill all her children with death; and all the churches" - not the world here, in the first instance - "all the churches", this church, therefore; this church - "shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts". The reins, the seat of thought; the heart, the seat of the affections. And if God searcheth your reins, what thoughts will He see? What thoughts will He see, even as we are now in this service? What thoughts does He see in the day time? And if sometimes you are devising mischief on your beds, would it not be a mercy to remember that He searcheth the reins? Nothing escapes Him. It is a trembling consideration with some. Nothing escapes Him. You think unkindly of Him sometimes; He knows it. You think unjustly of Him; He knows it. You think unkindly of a friend; He knows it. You entertain a sort of revenge; He calls it murder. He searches, He looks into this. A cursory glance of things we may take; not so, Christ. And "I will give unto every one of you according to your works". Do you sow to the flesh, O Christian? Listen - You "shall of the flesh reap corruption". Do you sow to the Spirit? Listen - You "shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "But unto you I say, and unto the rest" - I say unto you, the angel and "unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine" - of devils, the doctrine of Jezebel - "and which have not known the depths of Satan as they" - the holders of the doctrine of Jezebel - "as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden". I wont add to this that I have already said. Flee from

idolatry; flee from covetousness; flee from the world; flee from the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I will add nothing to what I have said in these things. But leave Jezebel and her children as you have already escaped, and not come into the terrible heresy, and wicked life. "I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come."

Now here we have to notice that this church had got something worth keeping; already got something worth keeping, this church. What a mercy for this church at Galeed if the Saviour of sinners, the dear Lord Jesus Christ, should look on it, and on all the godly in the congregation who, speaking generally, ought to be in the church; if He should say, You have got something. Jezebel has not robbed you of all. What is that something? It is, first, the doctrine of Christ. Hold fast the doctrine of Christ. What is in the doctrine of Christ? That which made Him Christ. That which made Him Christ. What is that? The eternal election of Him to be the Head of the church, involving His incarnation, His obedience, His death, His burial, His resurrection. We have got that, blessed be God. It is dear to every one instructed in it by the Holy Ghost. Hold that fast. Faith in it will alone enable you to hold it. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". Precious in this particular. Hold fast that blessed Person, and that which made Him what He is. Hold fast that which belongs to His Person. What belongs to the Person of Christ? The Eternal Godhead belongs to Him. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily". That awful, infinite, glorious Being, from whom every sinner must fly, from whose anger every sinner must try to get away; that blessed God in Jesus Christ is approachable, knowable, lovable, gracious, gentle, meek, tender, compassionate, full of goodness, full of mercy. You have got that. O, thanks be to God, that we have received this Jesus Christ into our hearts. Some of us must acknowledge it. Hold fast what you see the Lord Jesus to be, what He possesses. Hold fast His death, the death that has given us life; that has made a new and living way to the Father for us; that has put away our sin; that has brought in an everlasting righteousness. That death by which we are delivered from the law, and bondage, and slavish fear, and brought, as from an infinite distance, to nearness. Hold it fast, my friends. But you say, Who is in danger? You are, I am, unless we are kept. Very significant is Christ's word

- may it be remarked by us - Pray this - "Lead us not into temptation". "Lead us not into temptation".

Say, could the tempter try
To shake a tree so sound, so green?
Good God, defend the dry! (312)

Is your judgement informed? The false, wicked spirit, the devil, may transform himself into an angel of light, and begin to preach to you - Lo here is Christ, and Lo there is Christ - and begin, in some way, to lessen in your view, and feeling, all that the Saviour is, and all that He has done. Hold fast His precious death. Hold fast His burial, and His righteous resurrection. "And that He was buried". O, it is a beautiful light in that word, where the Apostle, to the Corinthians, says - "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." And hold fast this, that this inspired Book informs us that this Lord Jesus showed Himself alive after His resurrection by many infallible proofs. And if any unbelieving Sadducee comes to you, and disputes about the resurrection of Christ, just meet him with this Scripture. He could not be holden by the pains of death; therefore God loosed those pains, and He rose from the dead. And if one of the Pharisees should say, "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" - though it might not seem polite, follow Paul. He said to such an objecter - "Thou fool" - do not hesitate in a proper manner to use the inspired Word - "Thou fool that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body". Hold fast the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Hold fast His intercession in heaven. Remember that the Holy Ghost has put the salvation of the Church on the intercession of Christ. "Able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Hold fast this, that this great Saviour has now in His hand the waters, and the winds and all providence; that nothing can move

without Him. Hold fast the Covenant of Grace. Hold fast the blessed doctrines that are in the Covenant of Grace. Now my beloved friends, these cardinal doctrines, with all the related doctrines which you can see in the Scriptures, the Church of Christ has, and every Church of Christ instructed by the Spirit has these doctrines of grace. What a mercy to have these doctrines. What a blessing to believe them. Now if we believe them rightly, these several things will be in us.

First, the power of them. Dry doctrine will not save us. The power of them - whence is that power? The Holy Ghost gives it. He it is, by whom we receive, not in word, but in power, and in much affliction, the blessed gospel of Christ. Truth comes from Him as He is the Spirit of Truth. It comes into the heart; it fills an empty place, it affects a sore soul, and it rules in a tender conscience. It rules in the fear of the Lord. There is a power in the truth; a power that conforms the person, to whom it comes, to its own image. It begets a likeness in you to itself, a conformity to its beautiful image. It begets, wherever it is, in power, therefore, great regard for God's character, great regard to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and whatever He did. Does this church know that? Some of its members do, if not all. And if any of you, the members of this church, and gracious people in the congregation, are sleeping, sleeping on a respectable, consistent profession, woe be to you, for if indeed you belong to the Lord, you have got to be awakened, and it will be an awakening indeed. If the truth has now no power over you; if it does not sanctify you to God; if it does not attract to the throne of God's heavenly grace; if you will be among those who, when the Lord Jesus comes in solemn judgement, shall be found sleeping, and slumbering, it will be indeed a very solemn hour with you. Hold fast that which you have felt in power. Ah, it will prove much to be here. It will prove a blessed thing for us to have had the power of truth in our souls. Were you ever divorced from any particular sin by the truth? Were you ever saved from any wrong thing by the truth speaking to you? Were you ever humbled under a trial by the truth speaking to you? Were you ever attached to the Lord Jesus by the truth speaking in your heart about Him? Were you ever brought to cast yourself, a ruined sinner, upon the illimitable ocean of His love, and merit? If so, there was a power. The truth is power. The truth makes free. Jesus

is the Truth. The truth is expressed in His Person, and by His lips, and by His Spirit, and in His atonement, and in His righteousness. The truth is expressed in those ways.

And the next thing is this, that the truth unites the soul to Him who is the Truth. Truth is uniting. As it separates from error, and from self, it unites to itself, and to the Lord Jesus the separated sinner, and that person who is separated to Christ, and for Christ will cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Is this church separated? Charity is not universal, I mean true charity. Being holy, it can love nothing but what is holy. Wrought by the Spirit, it can keep to nothing but what is the sound, and, so to speak, the form, of the Spirit. Nothing but what comes from the Spirit will be received and loved by this love. Love of the truth, a separating truth; it will make you a good neighbour, but it wont leave you at liberty to walk as the world walks. It will separate you from the world. Hold fast the separating truth, separating you from the world, and unto everything that is godly, and dear to the Lord. Hold that fast, and hold fast what you have had in any particular way. As when the Lord Jesus speaks a comforting word to a person in tribulation. As when He says - "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee". If you have found His blessed presence in the waters of trouble, hold that fast. He may go away, as to His comfortable presence, but He will never undo His word respecting your condition, in such, and such afflictions. Any promise of guidance - did He give it you? Then hold it fast. And here let me notice what is in the Scriptures respecting a church - "From whom" - that is Christ, the Head - "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth"....."maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love". Now if you get something from God, if you get a word from God, you have got a friend, a fellow member, a husband, a wife, and you will be sure to go to them and tell them about it, and that will be like ministering to the other. Every joint ministers something to the neighbour joint; it will be an influence. So, when the Lord blesses a fellow-member, the church will partake of the benefit of it. In another way, the Apostle speaks this to some - ".....Ye all are partakers of my grace." (Philippians 1 v 7), but I think it may be accommodated at this point to anything that comes from God to a single member; others partake of that grace in the fruit of

it. Does He speak comfortably to you? Perhaps you said to a fellow member, The Lord seems angry with me; He is silent to me. Now, when He speaks comfortably, you will have to go to that friend and say, Now He has changed His manner to me; He has spoken comfortably to me. And that will have an influence. It is ministering - as the Apostle says in another place - ministering grace to the hearers. Let your speech be always seasoned with salt that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Hold that fast. It is very different from easy, religious talk, very different. You meet your minister, you meet a deacon, you meet a friend, and there is religious talk, and you part as dry as can be. Nothing communicated; no fresh feeling of union to the Lord and His people. But when you meet in the power of some truth, some doctrine revealed, some communication made to you, then there is some influence. Perhaps you have gone away from a godly friend, and said, O if the Lord would give me as much grace as He gave to him. And the reason has been this, he has had something from the Lord, and he has been telling you about it, and it has warmed your heart, and done you good. And this is the real communion of saints. Do distinguish from the ordinary religious talk that you may have plenty of. Distinguish this from that; it is very different. Hold fast any communication that God may have mercifully, and powerfully, made to your souls. Walk in these things, dear friends. As He said - "that which ye have already". You have got these mercies, these blessings.

Hold fast the ordinances of His house. The early church soon became lax in respect of the ordinances. And you find, quite early in the life of the church, after Apostolic days, that they were lax about baptism. Then infant sprinkling came. First, an adult professor, one apparently newly brought to the doctrines of grace, but sick, and likely to die; baptism was taken to him; he could not be immersed, so he was sprinkled. That is how the error respecting baptism crept unawares into the church, the professing church of God. Hold fast that ordinance. O, but what danger is there to us of losing it? You do not know. False charity may come in. Now so and so is a good man, or a good woman, why be so strict? Keep close to God's Word. Hold fast the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper. You have received it. The Apostle said it as he had received it. I delivered unto you that which I also received. And he tells us of the institution of the Ordinance, how it is to be attended to. "This do in remembrance of

Me." Do not some of you, who have never followed Jesus Christ in the ordinance of baptism, but who have had tokens for good, feel at times, when the ordinance is administered, that you are missing a great deal? But the church is here spoken to - hold it fast. I praise you, said Paul, that you keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 1 Corinthians 11 v 2). But then, when he came to their irregularities as a church, he blamed them. That which you have already, hold fast. Do not think any divine truth, any Scripture holy ordinance is a matter of indifference. It is not - it cannot be - for Christ has set the stamp of His Own authority, and example, upon the ordinances of His house. He is King, and Master, and Lord, in His Own house, and He speaks - "Till I come". Hold these things fast. When the hand of your faith has got hold of them by the power of the Holy Ghost, be careful, and jealous, lest the enemy should beguile you to loosen your grip on them, and you let them go. Who can say how many churches have gone this way? These seven churches went; there is not one left today, nor a representative of them, as far as I know. And who can say how many churches in our own beloved land have risen, decayed, and died? Chapels I remember here and there, once full in my young days, empty and closed today. Empty of people; closed; no services. It is a very solemn consideration. And you see a true church has this; it cannot build itself. "Ye are God's building." And we have to say this, as a great truth; that, while we may admit error, and may join ourselves to wrong things, and may listen to seducers, we cannot by any means get right without the Lord kindly, graciously, severely, lovingly pointing out the errors and threatening us that if we repent not the candlestick shall be removed. Be careful my brethren, be careful. The day is coming when there will be a great test. I have often said to you lately - I may not see that day; I am old and may be taken before that day comes - but you young people probably will see it. "Till I come". What is this coming? When He comes to a saint, and particular person, to reprove him, and deal with him, that is kindness. When He comes in death's message, and says to the saint, Now you have reached the bounds that I have fixed for your habitation; you have come to the end of your pilgrimage; come home to Me. But this coming is another thing. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Will there be more Christians in any particular church in our land than probably the church at Thyatira had, when the great day, and the battle that is yet to be fought in its fullness,

comes? When the silence of the two witnesses, whose prophesying terminated the world, shall have been fulfilled? Then, will the Son of Man find faith on the earth? And if any of you live to that day, then you will enter into that Scripture, that God will send a famine, not of bread, but of hearing the Word of God; nor a thirst of water, but just of hearing God's Word, and men shall walk from the North to the East seeking that Word, and shall not find it. The means God uses, the Word by which He begets His people as sons to Himself, the first-fruits of His creatures, the very Word that you have listened to, the minister you have received, taken away. And when He thus comes, will He find faith on the earth? If Galeed is open that day, and the church existing now shall exist then, and you members of it, as many of you as shall be living then, will He find the hand of your faith holding fast what you have got, and what you have received? Will the Lord find you in this condition? May it please Him to speak to you, to speak to me, and if He would, graciously speak to you by me. My position is very solemn. A watchman has a duty. In a cold, dark night he may have to keep awake. He has got to look for enemies. He knows they exist. He has to see if they are coming to this place, that place, and if he sees them coming, and does not give warning, and any of the people perish, it will be a serious thing for him. But if he give warning and the people, or some of them, take no heed, and perish, no blood is required at his hand. Now then, look at this word, and listen, as God may help you, to an old friend, and minister, in speaking this word of warning to you. Rather, may you listen to the Lord's Word. "That which thou hast". It is an acknowledgement that this people had something, got something from Him. He had given them something, and now He says to them, You have received people you ought not to have received; you suffer people to be with you; you have not exercised church discipline as you ought to have done. That has gone today. O, how little, if any, true discipline could be found. He says to this people, You have not done it. You suffered that adulteress, that wicked seducer, to be in your midst. She had not done what the church at Ephesus did, for which that church was commended. She had not tried them which said they were apostles, and found they were not, and found then liars, but she had suffered them amongst her. And when any doctrine is propounded to you, if it should be that it is not right, be careful about receiving it.

Now I must leave the matter with you. Christ is coming; not in Person as some vainly imagine, to reign on earth for a thousand years, but He is coming. First of all to meet His enemies in the world. And He must have an army with Him; He must have some with Him. That is to say, the fight that will be made against Him will be as He is in His church, in His people. And when will this be? When awful judgements come, and they that are with the Lamb, are called by His grace, and chosen in His love, and faithful by His powerful teaching, and upholding; they are called, and chosen, and faithful. Then you say, some of you perhaps, How can such a treacherous dealer as myself hope to be with Him? Through grace, through the Spirit's work, by the atonement in its virtue on your conscience, and the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost. That will do; you will stand fast then. "Till I come". And may the Lord grant that when He comes to you as a people He may find you standing on His side, faithful to His blessed Name, holding fast the form of sound words, so that no man may take thy crown. The crown of a church state may be taken. No individual saint can be lost, but a church state may be lost, and the crown of a church state may be removed, taken away. May it never be taken away from you. There is one comfortable word in the book of Joshua which may look kindly on you, on this, our church. It is this - "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had seen the works of the Lord." May He be with us, hold us up, that we may hold fast to Him.

AMEN.