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SERMON PREACHED BY MR. OLDFIELD AT GOWER STREET, LONDON,  
ON 21st SEPTEMBER, 1890

Text: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." ( II Tim.i.12)

The words of my text, with the context, clearly show the inseparable connection between tribulation and truth. As Mr. Hart says:

"The souls that would to Jesus press  
Must fix this firm and sure,  
That tribulation, more or less,  
They must and shall endure. (305)

The apostle, speaking to Timothy, whom he calls his dearly beloved son, says in the eighth verse, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Why should he be ashamed of it? Because there were dreadful threats following it. The testimony of our Lord signifies not the mere letter of the word, but the application of the truth of God to the heart and conscience. The devil will enrage the minds of men not so much against the mere letter of the word as against the power of the truth of God in its application to the heart. "Nor of me His prisoner." Do not be ashamed of me, though I am a prisoner - a prisoner of Jesus Christ. "But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel." Here is the certain effect of the gospel - the affliction of the gospel. It follows, as the apostle elsewhere says in writing to Timothy: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim.iii.12). Not living according to free will, or creature power, but "according to the power of God" - as the power of God is put forth in teaching, leading, preserving.

"Who hath saved us." That God who hath saved us is needed to keep us; that God who hath given life can alone sustain that life in us; and that God has "called us with a holy calling." God's calling must be a holy calling because He is a holy God; and it must be a holy calling because He calls His people to holy things. "Not according to our works." Is not that a favour? If my calling were according to my works, it would be a wretched affair; and I believe yours would, too. "But according to His own purpose and grace" - His own eternal mind, His own immutable will, His own boundless knowledge. According to His grace is my election sure, His redeeming,

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regenerating, pardoning, justifying, sanctifying, glorifying grace. "Which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." What! Four thousand years ago? Yes; and more than that.

"But is now made manifest." How? "By the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ" - by His incarnation, by the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh. "Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." It is made manifest not only by what Jesus Christ did, but by the Holy Ghost coming into our hearts. This is the gospel which the apostle Paul preached, and this is the gospel which, I hope and trust, God has made me a preacher of, and which, I hope and believe, while He gives me strength, I will uphold whether men will hear or forbear.

"Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things." Men were filled with deadly enmity against the Lord's servant Paul, and so they persecuted him, reproached him, and put him in prison. "Nevertheless I am not ashamed." No; through the power of God in his soul, he was not ashamed of the gospel, with all its accompanying afflictions, persecutions, and imprisonments. Oh, dear friends, those who know the gospel in its life and power, if I may speak for others, feel a preciousness in the gospel. Then the apostle gives the reason in the words of my text: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Now, with the Lord's help, we may notice several things in these words:

- I. I would notice the grace of faith - that grace which makes one a believer.
- II. The object of faith - who is believed.
- III. The work of faith which is spoken of in committing one's soul entirely to the Lord.

There is the work of faith and the assurance of faith.

- I. There is a good deal said about faith in the present day, and there is a good deal in God's own word. The faith of God's giving is set forth in a variety of ways, which we will endeavour to enlarge upon. The faith which was in the apostle's heart was the faith which God the eternal Spirit wrought in his soul; and without that faith in a man's heart he can no more be a believer than a locomotive can move a train without steam.

There must be faith in the heart, or there cannot be life. We will just notice some of the things that Scripture says about it. "It is the gift of God." (Eph.ii.8). If it is the gift of God, no man naturally possesses it. No man can possess it unless God gives it to him. It is said to be a fruit of the Spirit (Gal.v.22). If it is a fruit of the Spirit, it cannot be a fruit of the flesh; the Spirit must produce it. We need the fruit of the Spirit; it must be in our hearts; the Holy Ghost alone can bring it forth, and He gives it to whomsoever He pleases. It is said to work by love (Gal.v.6). Then love must accompany it; there must be love to the Lord of glory. It is also said to purify the heart (Acts xv.9). Where this faith is, the heart will be purified, as it purified the heart of Moses. When this faith began to work in his heart, he could no longer remain in the family of princes. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb.xi.24,25). This faith, then, will bring a man out of, and separate him from, the world; and this faith, it is said, ends in the salvation of the soul (I Peter i.9). Oh, what a precious thing is faith! "Like precious faith" (II Pet. i.1). If we have a little of this faith, however small it may be, it will end in the salvation of the soul. Now the apostle had this faith; hence he was a believer.

II. The object of this faith: "Whom I have believed" - a Three-One God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but I may say especially the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot think too much of Him as the object of faith, because His Father determined from all eternity to glorify Him. You cannot think much of Jesus Christ without thinking much of His Father, who has given His only Son. When you are thinking much of the Son of God, you are thinking much of the Father who gave Him and of the blessed Spirit who hath revealed Him to your heart.

Well, then, I say Jesus Christ is the object of true faith - "whom I have believed." I have believed in His Godhead. Those who know that they are lost and ruined are brought to believe in the Godhead of Christ; their faith is fixed upon Christ. He must be God to save my soul; He must be God to be Mediator between God and my soul; He must be God to rescue us. He must also be man, assuming our nature. This is the Person whom I have believed. He must be truly God and truly man - two natures in one Person. Jacob saw this Person in that ladder set up on the earth whose top was in heaven; it linked heaven and earth together. It was neither too short nor too long,

but just reached heaven and earth. There is the object of faith, and we may look at His work for a moment or two - His life and death, His righteousness and atonement.

Jesus said: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life" (John vi.54). I understand by His flesh what He did in His flesh, from His birth to His death. He brought in an everlasting righteousness for His people (Dan.ix.24). Faith looks to His life for righteousness, to His death, His blood, for forgiveness. His blood is necessary to blot out our transgressions, to take away our stains and sins - yea, our filthiness. How needful is that blood felt to be by a poor, sensible sinner! He desires to get at least a glimpse, by the eye of faith, of this glorious Person, this precious Saviour Jesus Christ, who "is able to save to the uttermost" (Heb.vii.25).

I would say a little bearing upon the particular work of faith spoken of: "Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." This is not the first act of faith in the heart of any child of God. If I may speak from my own experience, the first act of faith in my heart was one of looking. But what did I see? Why, a fallen, lost, depraved sinner - a sinner as near hell as it was apparently possible to be, and yet not to be there. When God first spoke to my heart, and caused His word to enter into my conscience, I found a faith like this at work. But, then, what a dreadful sight to look upon, what trembling before God there was, what a separation from the things I had rolled in before! I had put off sins as far as external matters go, but the inward sins seemed to abound more and more. Then came the question, What will become of my never-dying soul? I now believe that this was the working of faith. At the time I did not know, but now I believe it was the movement of the living faith of God in my heart, a faith that God had planted in my never-dying soul, by which I saw myself. Then I wanted to see God, to see His blood to save my soul, to see Him clearly before my eyes. If you have a dark object before your eye, you cannot see a bright one unless the object is put immediately before your eye. And so you may have the faith of God in your heart and not be able to see anything but a vile sinner. But when the blessed Spirit reveals the Saviour, what a sight is Jesus Christ to a sensible sinner! What an invitation is that recorded in Isaiah: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (xlv.22). Now these are the ends of the earth - the vilest of sinners - and these are feelingly at the greatest distance from God. I can remember when the Lord favoured me with a sight of Jesus Christ as God-man Mediator. I shall never forget the sight; it was, to my mind, the most

glorious sight I had ever beheld. I was not, for some time after that, enabled to see Him as my Saviour; I saw Him as one able to save my soul if He would. Oh, then, how I pleaded, how I wrestled with God to show me that He had died for me, that He had saved my soul, that He had opened a fountain for me, that I was indeed sprinkled with that precious blood which He had shed, and that I might feel the effects of it applied to my conscience. But God, in His own time, gave me a sight of this; and, when one has such a sight, he can enter into those words of Newton:-

"A bleeding Saviour seen by faith,  
A sense of pardoning love,  
A hope that triumphs over death,  
Give joys like those above." (933)

But not only is faith the eye, but it is also the mouth of the soul to feed upon the word of God. Faith takes you to God's word. It will cause you to open your Bible and search the Scriptures, and it will cause you to meditate upon one portion or another of God's blessed word. They will all seem blessed portions. In secret, faith will cause you to plead for God to open your eyes to behold the wonders His word contains. And it will cause you to attend where His truth is proclaimed, because your soul is hungering and thirsting for it.

This faith is sometimes spoken of as the hand (I John i.1). The woman that had an issue of blood, when she heard that Jesus was near, approached the dear Redeemer as closely as she could. There, in the midst of the crowd, was the Person who could heal her; so that she must not only go amongst the people, which was forbidden by the law of Moses, but she must really press forward. Faith wrought in her heart, and, for the moment, she appeared to forget the law of Moses as she pressed through the crowd and touched His garment, drawing virtue out of Him. All poor sinners who feel their need of Jesus Christ prove that it separates them from the world; it brings them to a precious Christ, and causes them to gather virtue from Him. The soul is made to go trembling like the poor woman, telling the Lord the whole truth. Thus the conscience is made honest by the work of God in the soul.

Well, now, when the soul is brought to see, to approach, to touch the hem of the Lord's garment, to taste that He is gracious, does not that soul want wholly to be His? He says to such: "My son, give Me thine heart" (Prov.xxiii.26). And what does the son say? He says, as we sang this morning,

"Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,  
Seal is from thy courts above!" (199)

Yes; if he had a thousand hearts, the Lord should have them all. How freely, how willingly, would he give Him his heart! He very often trembles and fears lest the Lord has not got his heart, and he is afraid that he has not sincerely cried after the Lord.

There is a great deal felt by the power of faith. This precious faith brings us to know that we need to be saved by His blood, guided by His counsel, led by His Spirit so as to be wholly and entirely His. Some may not have come to this point yet. You may have had a glimpse of Christ as a Saviour, some little touch of His virtue, some encouraging words; but perhaps you cannot yet say you have had a sweet manifestation of Him to pardon your sins.

III. Now a few words upon the persuasion or assurance: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded." Look at the basis upon which the Apostle's persuasion rests - Him whom I know and have believed; therefore, "am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." He did not presume; he knew. How did he know? What sort of knowledge was it? He did not learn it at the feet of Gamaliel; he knew nothing of Christ as a Saviour there. He was therefore enraged against Him. But now he says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded." And if you know, then your assurance is just in accordance with your spiritual and experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Then what did he know? He knew the power of God as a raising power, raising the dead - not only because He had raised Lazarus from the dead, but because He had raised his own soul from spiritual death. I trust that I know His power in raising my soul from death; I am as certain of that as that I exist. I was once dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore had no more real concern about my soul's salvation than about anything else of a spiritual nature. What a condition I was in!

The apostle knew the power of God not only in raising the dead, but also in opening the eyes of the blind. He knew it because his own blind understanding had been enlightened, the scales removed from his own eyes (Eph.i.18). I hope many of you do. How do you get this? By feeling as blind as a bat. Every week I feel I have preached my last sermon, and I say: "It is all over now"; and often I think there never was anything - but, if there ever was, it is exhausted now. Still, where there is a longing soul, he says: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law (Psa.cxix.18). And God sometimes brings a verse before one's eye, or a

sentence in a verse; and when He does that, there seems enough in that verse to think about if one should live a hundred years. Men cannot teach that; God only can reveal it in such a way as that.

The apostle knew God's power not only in raising the dead and in opening the eyes of the blind, but he also knew His power when he was brought before Nero a second time, just before he departed this life. He wrote this Epistle when, like a shock of corn, fully ripe (Job v.26). Perhaps you will realise this when you come to your dying bed. But it is God's gift. Paul was on the brink of eternity, and we find him writing thus: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (II Tim.iv. 6-8). Therefore, ye fearful ones, do not be cast down, for there is a crown of righteousness for you as well as for the stronger ones.

Paul knew not only God's power, but He also knew His grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor. xii.9). He knew not only that God had said these words, but he had had a clear demonstration of them in his own heart. And do not we know a little about this? Has not His grace been sufficient for us in times of darkness and trouble? Had it not been so, we should have given up long ago, as many mere professors have done. God's grace has been sufficient to preserve and keep us until now; and we now feel God's grace supporting us in our trials, afflictions, and sorrows. It supports, strengthens, feeds, and enables a poor sinner to see that, notwithstanding all these trials, his soul will get to glory - not on the ground of human merit, but on the foundation of free, rich, and sovereign grace. And not only this, but he knows he is depending on the faithfulness of God, that God will not break His word, that God's honour is at stake even in his own case (1106). He knows from his own experience and from the blessed proofs of God's veracity which are set forth in His word. If He pleases, He can suspend the laws of nations and of nature. As Newton says,

"Sooner all nature shall change,  
Than one of God's promises fail." (276).

What power was manifested when the sun and moon stood still upon Gibeon and in the valley of Ajalon! (Josh.x.12). Again what an instance, in regard both to the laws of nations and of nature, when Daniel was put into the lions' den. He might as

well have been put into a rabbit's burrow, because God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths (Dan.vi.8,12,22). God suspends the laws of nature in many other ways to carry out His purposes. He strengthens His people, and supports them when they are reproached. I remember one particular occasion when I was amongst ungodly men, and they were determined that I should associate with them or they would drive me away from the place. They got on either side of me and poured forth in my ears all the blasphemous words they could utter, when God said, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" (I Cor.iv.7). How sweet it was, when all the inventions and wicked devices of men and devils were against my poor soul! The apostle knew something of this, and I hope you know something of it, too. "Whom I have believed." I know the veracity, the faithfulness of God. Some of us have proved it in many instances. We have some measure of Paul's assurance - especially at those times when we believe that He is able to keep that which we "have committed unto Him against that day." What day? Why, the day of one's death, or the day of the Lord's second appearing. O, to inherit that eternal glory! There will be no night there, no need of a candle, no artificial light there; the Lamb will be the light thereof (Rev.xxi.23). What a blissful, glorious day for every child of God! If God is there, then there will be far more for you than all that can be against you. (II Kings vi.16).