

Overcoming by Faith in the Son of God

Preached At Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Friday Evening,
June 18th, 1926

by J. K. POPHAM -

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5:5)

It is more important for us to have faith in the Son of God, than it is to know that we have faith in Him; the first is vital to our state; the second is necessary to our comfort.

"The Christian often cannot see
His faith, and yet believes."

He hangs about the Cross, he hankers after the coming into his soul of Christ, that is faith. The coming of Christ is his comfort; he knows when Christ comes. The sinner can say: I "know that the Son of God is come, and hath given [me] an understanding, that [I] may know Him that is true, and [I am] in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20) But though the child of God cannot always say that, his faith lives; and that faith fastens on Him, of Whom it is said in the prophets: "The Desire of all nations shall come." (Hag. 2:7) Things get shaken, we get shaken, the world is shaken, families are shaken, business is shaken; we change, we become sick and weakly, and get near to the grave; but there is one thing in the child of God that does not decay as to its nature, though it is not always in action, and that is the faith which the Holy Ghost gives. It stands in His power, it moves in His power; it rose in His revealing light, and it is established by a manifestation. We are very apt to confuse faith with comfort; and if the latter be lacking, to fear that the former is also. But I would repeat again what I opened with, that it is more important to have faith than it is to know that we have faith. What a mercy it is to be a believer! If you try to draw the line between the world and the Church, how will you do it? One may say: "I should begin with the doctrines of grace; I should begin with election; and I should go on with the Incarnation of the Son of God, His Priesthood, to His Cross. I should go to the grave, and see Him rise; and follow Him as He ascends from Bethany into heaven." You do well, for the doctrines of grace are blessed doctrines; and a man should know them. Whoever denies them, gives evidence of being dead; but there are a good many people in the religious world who can go with you there; but they are overcome by the world. If I had to draw a line, and I will try to draw it this evening, between the world that lieth in wickedness, and the Church of the living God, I should say that the line is vital faith, in the Church of God, which the world has not. This blessed faith in Christ will bring the possessor of it, more or less continually to his knees. Faith empties the soul; it is an emptying grace, that is a part of the business which God has put into its hand. It will tell you, if you have it, what a wretch you are; you will believe every word which God says about your corruption, and you will feel it too. And then, when the Holy Ghost manifests Jesus Christ, faith says in your soul: "You need nothing but that blessed One;

"His blood can cleanse the blackest soul,
And wash away each stain."

His righteousness justifies the ungodly, without any works; His intercession will bring you safely and honourably through all the afflictions, sins, oppositions, and temptations of the devil. His power will defend the feeble; and will give victory to the feeblest faith; it will say:

"None but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good."

This faith honours God, it pleases Him more than "ten thousands of rivers of oil," and all the beasts in the world for sacrifices. This faith in a weak soul, makes it strong: "He that is feeble among them...shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God." (Zech. 12:8) Faith works miracles: "All things are possible to him that believeth." "Thy brother shall rise again." Was it not a wonderful faith in Martha, and in Mary, both of whom said: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died?" (John 11:21) That faith laid hold of His power. And as the Lord went on to teach Martha, He said to her: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." (John 11:25) Martha said: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day:" and she only needed one word more to enable her to believe that he would rise again very shortly, and come forth out of his grave. That faith in her overcame all the difficulties. Hast thou faith? Look at the faith of the man whose eyes Jesus opened. Jesus met that persecuted, excommunicated man, and said: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." (John 9:35-38) The faith of the Syrophenician woman had the same blessed effect upon her soul; it held fast to the Lord, for she said: "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table;" and she prevailed. Jacob "had power over the Angel, and prevailed." (Hos. 12:4) Abraham had power. He believed what God told him, childless though he was that his seed should be as the stars in the sky for multitude. Moses had this blessed faith; and he forsook Egypt with all its power, wealth, and glitter; and faith enabled him to endure "as seeing Him Who is invisible." And so if you have faith, you will have Him for your one Object, Him of Whom the text speaks, the Son of God.

The chapter opens remarkably: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1) Now, "the Christ" means "the anointed One." It is not merely believing that there is a Man Whose Name was Jesus, Who lived a Jew, and was crucified by His fellow-countrymen. It is believing that He was anointed, which means that He was a Prophet, Priest, and King; and that God, His Father, anointed Him, and made Him a Preacher: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." (Luke 4:18) Now, my friends, though you may have no comfort in your souls, for the most part, and perhaps have never had that solid comfort which you need and desire can you come in here? None but Jesus, none but that blessed One, anointed of God, and sent by His Father to say the words which His Father gave Him to say; and to do the works which His Father did in eternity; that Lord Jesus, the Prophet of the Church, to teach her; the King of the Church, to reign in her, and over her; and the Priest of the Church to sacrifice for her, that Jesus is the Christ. What a Person!

"O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellences trace,
Could we His Person learn to prize,
We more should prize His grace."

As faith has an Object; as believing in that Object is the only weapon whereby we can overcome the world, I would like to speak in the first place about Christ, anointed. Kings of old were called christs, from the simple fact that they were anointed men. And when the holy Eternal Son of God became incarnate, He was anointed. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me;" anointed Him by giving Him the Holy Ghost without measure. (John 3:34) And so He, Who is God and also Man, had that Spirit in Him which He mercifully communicates to His people in measure, from time to time. And this anointing makes the Lord Jesus so wonderful, that He becomes the only Prophet, the only One Who can tell us of good things to come; Who came from heaven to do it. He came from His Father's bosom to reveal the Father's love and grace. He came to bring good-tidings from a far country, to poor, wretched sinners. He came to be a King in them, and over them, being anointed. "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." (Ps. 2:6) Every one who really believes in Him, says to Him at times, in the Spirit: "Reign o'er me as King." There is a place in the heart of a child of God for this King. They rejected Him when He came to His own people. He grants that Spirit to His saints, which enables them to say: "Lord, here is my heart; wilt Thou make it Thy Throne; reign over me, reign in me; subdue my lusts; crucify the old man, that I may say: 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'" (Gal. 2:20) And He was anointed to be a Priest for His people, for He is the great High Priest; "Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec." If we see Him in those characters; if we believe Him to be the King, Eternal, Immortal; "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto;" and Who brings to light that love, that favour of God, which is eternal life; if, I say, we believe this concerning Him, we shall overcome the world.

Now, faith is no fancy, it is no easy thing to believe. It is the easiest thing in the world to believe; it is the hardest thing in the world to believe. It is the easiest thing to believe, when that faith of God's operation, the faith of God's elect, is standing and moving, and looking, in the light and the operations of the Holy Ghost. Not all the infidelity in our hearts can make it difficult for us to believe when we see light in God's light. And then it will not matter what trouble you have, thus believing you will say: "He will bring me forth." "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10) It will not matter what allurements the world may dangle before your eyes; Christ is the One Object, and after Him you will go. It will not matter what righteousness another may pretend to have; the longing of the soul is to know that sacrifice of Christ; and that it was made for him. All this may be in a person who has not five minutes' comfort in a year, about his own interest. Yea, he may go years and years without any comfortable sense of interest; and yet he is an over-comer for all that. He turns away from the world; he says: "I cannot find any life here." He turns away from his so-called pleasures, for they are death to his soul. He turns away from everything which would teach him falsely, and make him look to, and depend on himself; for he finds this: that none can do him good but that blessed One Who is now in heaven, having entered there with His Own blood. I would press this on your notice, my dear friends, this evening, that this is an important thing, to have faith; the comfort of it will come later. If you have faith it will bring you to God; and there you will confess, and confess, and confess, as long

as you live. You will confess with the publican; confess with the dying thief; you will confess with Paul, an injurious person; you will confess with Manasseh, and the worst characters in the Bible; you will confess with them all, that you are a poor, undone, wretched creature; and nothing but faith will bring you to this, the faith that stands in the power of God. This is the purpose of faith, to bring a sinner to God.

Here Moses endured as seeing Him Who is invisible; here it was that he accounted all the riches and treasures of Egypt as nothing. Here it was that Paul stood; his own righteousness, his high privileges as a Jew, his great attainments in the law as a Pharisee, everything became to his believing heart as dung and dross, that He might win Christ; he believed in Him. If you do not believe in Him you will not suffer for Him; but if you really have faith in Him, you will count everything but loss, and suffer the loss of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Him. (Phil. 3:8) What a mercy to be a believer! Of all the gifts of God to a poor sinner in this world, this is one of the greatest, namely, faith; saved by grace "through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8) It is difficult to believe; the devil, the world, the flesh will stand in your way; they will threaten you, they will try to deceive you, they will promise good things. The devil may show you some things; as he showed Christ the world, and all the glory of it, and promised to give them to Him, if Christ would but worship him. The devil may hang some things before your eyes, and say: "These will all be yours, if only you will leave this miserable religion, and cast it to the dogs." Faith says: "No, these are empty things, there is no good in them for my soul; nothing here below can make me blessed; nothing can do me good in the whole world but Christ; and Christ alone can save, justify, sanctify, and help me; He can bring me honourably through." This faith keeps the soul. Satan says: "You do not know that you are right;" and your heart may say the same. You may say, and say honestly: "I have never had the atonement made known to me; I have never had a revelation of Christ in my soul;" and it may be very true. But now for the moment, may the Lord help you to look away from these lacks, they will always be with you until the Lord takes them away but for the moment look away from them if you can, and ask this question of yourself: Now, do I really believe that there is a remedy for my lost soul; a Saviour to save me from sin? Do I really believe? Now, perhaps you may say: "I do not know if I do." Well, how far can you go? can you say with the Apostle in this word: "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is anointed? and I think that I have seen in Him what the world denies to be in Him, a Prophet, a Priest, a King; and I would that He were all to me that I see Him to be." Well, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1) Now, true faith is like a beggar; it is like a beggar when a man is old and near his grave perhaps it is a better beggar than it was at the beginning faith is like a beggar; it goes to a rich Lord, it puts weakness, poverty, sin, and every evil thing that is felt, it goes with all this, and puts them before Him. You may say with Newton:

"Marks of grace I cannot show;
All polluted is my breast;
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest."

Notion is empty, cold, and helpless here; it is a living faith that will make a wicked man go to the holy, and blessed Lord Jesus. It is a living faith that will take all the sin that is in the heart to Him, Who alone can take it away. O, it is a great thing to be a believer! A believer is a miracle of

God's power, the creating work of the Holy Ghost. A believer is one who pleases God. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." (John 6:29) There is labour here; faith labors to get at God, to get supplies from a full Christ; labors with all those difficulties with which it has to contend. It needs strength, and God strengthens it, "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." (Eph. 3:16) Can this labour die? Can God pass this labour by, unheeded, unanswered? Now listen to what the Apostle Paul was inspired to say on this point; listen sinner, if you can; you can hear the word, but God alone can make you listen to it "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." (Heb. 6:10) If Christ be the Object of your faith, the Centre of your soul; the Fullness you would live on, from which you would draw daily supplies, if He be the Light, to show you what you are, Whose you are, and where you are, if He does this in your heart, you have living faith; and "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." You may have thousands of fears, you may walk in darkness very, very long, even most of your days; but God mercifully keeps you from kindling a fire, and compassing yourself about with sparks of your own; you would say, if it were put to you: "I would rather grope for the wall like the blind, than light a fire of my own, and walk in the light of it." "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." Faith is always attended by love; and though we may often question whether we have any love, yet I do believe that if one should come and speak against Christ in our ears, and try to take away the beauty, glory, and sufficiency of Christ, saying wicked things about Him, it would stir up love. Sometimes, when I have read the blasphemies of religious teachers about the Lord Jesus, denying His eternal Deity, denying His sacred humanity, saying that He was born as other men," that word in the Psalm has come into my heart: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies;" (Ps. 139:21-23) and I would say the same. O, love to Christ is a great thing; but you will never love Him if you have no faith in Him.

"Who is he that overcometh the world?" Who is the man that overcometh the world? the Pharisee? the high, dead, hard Calvinist? No. The fire of sin in them, the fire of temptation coming against them, will make their acquirements like tow in the fire. Who is the sinner who will overcome the world when it comes against him, when it mocks Christ, when it denies the eternal relationship to His Father, His Eternal Deity? when it says: "There is no efficacy in His blood? when it says that He is not a King? when it says that He is not a Prophet? when it speaks against Him as on His Throne? who is the man that overcometh the world then? The sinner who says: "Lord, I am too weak to stand, I am too weak to pray, I am too weak to live; do hold me up, keep me in the fear of God, let the fear of the Lord be in my soul, that clean fear whereby I shall depart from evil. Give me power to keep the word of Thy patience, the commandment and faith of Jesus. Hold Thou me up in Thy paths, 'hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.' (Ps. 17:5) I cannot depend on myself, I have nothing on which to depend, I have nothing but sin in my nature, nothing but ingratitude, lust, pride, worldliness, and vanity; but do save me from myself." You will see that poor, weak creature; before the Lord he stands, God is able to make him stand, and He does make him stand; He brings out that word in the truth of it: "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Dan. 11:32) The greatest exploit you will ever do, will be to go with yourself, a lost creature, to the Lord, and draw out of His fullness; and to find that as you dig wells in the wilderness, dig there by prayer and supplication, the Lord comes, and fills the pool, and satisfies the soul with marrow and fatness. What makes the man say: "Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down?" What makes him say,

and persevere in saying: "O, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, and come down, that the mountains that are between Thyself and my soul may flow down?" (Isa. 64:1) What moves him to say again and again, hour after hour: "Pardon mine iniquity, O Lord, for it is great?" (Ps. 25:11) What brings him to pray for the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Christ; and to seek daily, those supplies of grace that will make his mind spiritual, and purify his heart? for God purifies the heart; it is faith.

"Faith in the bleeding Lamb,
O, what a gift is this!"

If I have spoken the truth about it, may you be enabled to ponder over it. You may be very destitute of comfort, it may bring you to this point, to which the eunuch came. In answer to Philip's words: "If thou believest, thou mayest," he said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37) O, my friends, you may be very empty, I am very empty of many things; but now, if by God's mercy we can really come to this point, and say solemnly, as in His sight: We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that is a blessed, blessed point; we shall die well if we are at that point; we shall get a great "outgate" as the Scotch would say, if we are at that point. For there, is the atonement that Jesus, the Son of God made; there, is the righteousness that He wrought out; there, is the sanctification which He is able to give to our souls. There, is the power of God, the love of God, the goodness of God, the sweetness of God. There, is the Rose of Sharon; there, is the sweet and ever adorable Lord Jesus. You want comfort and so do I; but if the Lord should see fit to keep us without it for a time, what a mercy to have that faith that stands in the power of God; that faith that waves could not destroy in Paul's heart, that blessed faith.

"Who is he that overcometh the world?" If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we believe in the Father of the Lord Jesus. "He that hath seen Me," saith Christ, "hath seen the Father." "I in them, and Thou in Me," said Christ. Then this man believes in the Holy Ghost, the Author of this faith; the One Whose shining makes a sinner understand; and Whose teaching makes him wise unto salvation. And so He comes to this point, the word in this chapter: "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One." (1 John 5:7) Here are riches for poor people; here is life for dead souls; grace for graceless wretches; holiness for the polluted, the vile, who go by faith to the Throne of God's heavenly grace. Here are supplies of all that is in this world, or in the world to come. Here is power to hold up the weakest; wisdom to guide the most foolish wretch who ever felt his foolishness and wretchedness. Who is he then? Not the wise: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom;" nor the mighty," neither let the mighty man glory in his might;" nor the rich," let not the rich man glory in his riches." (Jer. 9:23) Well then, if riches, wisdom, and power are not to be gloried in, what can a man glory in? Says the prophet: "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. 9:24) As He helps me, while I live, I will preach down human nature; and by His help, I will preach up the Lord Jesus; and will say again and again:

"Christ is the Friend of sinners;
Be that forgotten never;

A wounded soul, and not a whole,
Becomes a true believer...

"Then hail, ye happy mourners,
Ye will at last be winners;
By Jesus blood, the righteous God
Now reconciles poor sinners."

Ah! it is a great thing to be reconciled; a great thing to feel that God has taken away the power of enmity, broken up its dominion; and given us a little faith and love to His Name. I say again, The rest is sure to come. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isa. 66:13) If you can hang about Him, He will come; He will not send you empty away. O, I know this is true; for I cannot live without Him. Often I do not have Him in my soul, with the enjoyment that I would have; but I cannot live without Him; and so I am under the necessity of begging, and of going to Him again and again. Now, dear friends, do this if you can, God helping you; and this I would press on you, see if you get that wonderful grace, that great, blessed gift of the Holy Ghost, the faith of God's operation. If you have, heaven is yours, though hell may stand between heaven and you, many and many a time; and dark clouds, guilty fears, and many, many sinkings will be your painful experience. Still, this Saviour says: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." (John 12:26) One may say, "I am not a servant of God." If you are the bond-slave of the Saviour, that is, if faith in you holds you to the Cross, you serve in the gospel. Ah! many and many a man may serve Him, as he thinks, outwardly; he may talk about religion, he may exhort sinners; and then if the Lord deal not with that man, by the Holy Ghost, he may say one day: "Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name...and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" (Matt. 7:22) He may say: "We have eaten and drunk with Thee, in religion, in church-fellowship." And what will the Lord say? "I never knew you." And here is a poor sinner, who says: "I wish I were a Christian; I am not, and am afraid that I never shall be one. I wish I were right; but am afraid I never can be; I wish I had the experience of my friends." Well, you may never get it in that measure; but if you are enabled to say: "I wish the Lord would bless my soul; I believe I am lost; I wish He would bless me; and come to me and say: 'I have redeemed thee;'" "well, go on, poor sinner, go that way; and be jealous of anything and everything that would turn you aside from that. If Christ has thus espoused you to Himself as a chaste virgin, be jealous of everything that would turn your heart, eyes, thoughts, and attention, away from that; and hang about Him. O, He says to a seeker: "Seek ye My Face."

Who is he that believeth? A sinner who is possessed with faith. "Who is he that overcometh the world?" He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. May we be made believers. Amen.