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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening, 23 November 1927

1 Corinthians 15 v 58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast,
unmoveable, always abounding in the work
of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that
your labour is not in vain in the Lord

Our holy religion is based on fact. This deserves our closest attention. The fact of God's Being is the foundation of all true religion, of all acceptable, accepted worship, of all faith, and solid hope, of all true love, and the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the foundation of all Christian expectation of a blessed immortality. This, the Apostle distinctly declares in this chapter against the Saducees. He writes "But now is Christ risen from the dead". The resurrection is a fact then which no event in the whole of the history of the world is better attested. It is worth your attention that there is nothing in the whole of the world that is more clearly, more emphatically attested than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We build upon a base, if we build here by the Holy Ghost. Think dear friends, we shall soon be in our graves. Many of us profess to have a hope of immortality. Consider the ground of that hope. Not only the Person of Christ, not only the death of Christ, not only the burial of Christ, but the keystone of the arch, of all, the resurrection of Christ. The denial of it is one of the most grievous sins that a man can commit. Philosophy, vain philosophy and deceit have come to the aid of infidels, that is, of men who deny the Scriptures, and it tells them that resurrection is impossible. And philosophy on the other hand comes and, while denying the blessed resurrection of the Lord Jesus by the power of the Father, by His own power, and by the Holy Ghost, they say it may be a physical possibility. We must leave all that and look at what the Scripture says. "Now is Christ risen from the dead." And see if you believe that, really believe it. Look for a moment at the terrible consequences of Christ not rising from the dead. The Apostle declares that the consequences are several and very terrible. First

of all, every believer is believing a lie; he is yet in his sins; his faith in Christ is vain. He has no ground to hope for anything beyond this life. That is the first consequence of Christ not rising from the dead. Reflect upon it, think of Christ being in the grave. Now bury your hopes, give up religion. Nothing that we profess is worth thinking about for another minute. A second consequence is that every minister of Jesus Christ who says that He is risen, that God raised Him from the dead, is a false witness and has preached what is not true. Very solemn for the ministers, and very terrible for the hearers who have believed their testimony. A third consequence in this chapter is this, that - "If in this life only" - which indeed will be true if Christ was not raised by the power of His Father from the dead - "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable". We have given the world up; we have protested that it is of no value to us, and yet if it be so that God did not raise up His Son from the dead, there is no ground for us to think there is anything beyond this life, and why give up the world. Then I would again say to you, consider - God help each one of us to consider very seriously - the awful thing of denying the fact of Christ's resurrection. It is a terrible thing. Look at the doctrines that are connected with this. "If Christ" says Paul "If Christ be not raised from the dead", everything is wrong; the foundation is destroyed. All doctrines that we believe are false doctrines; the Scripture is denied. Look at the relation of one doctrine to another. There are links in a chain, and the doctrines of the gospel are not single and unrelated. They are all related closely, indissolubly. You cannot destroy one without denying and destroying all. The incarnation, of which we boast, mercifully - what use is it as a doctrine; it is a false thing. The doctrine of the incarnation is that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him, but if Christ is in the grave that doctrine is of no efficacy. The doctrine of His perfect obedience, His substitutionary work, His vicarious death, that too is destroyed by the denial of the resurrection of Christ, for of what avail would His death be if, having died, and died as the Scriptures say, voluntarily, he remained in the grave? The doctrine of His righteousness is broken to pieces and rendered invalid, for if the Lord Jesus were held by the bands of death, that would have said that His satisfaction was not enough, but Peter testifies in the Acts of the Apostles in the Day of Pentecost

that He could not be holden of death. Why could He not be holden of death? I believe this was the reason. He owed nothing to it; He had paid every mite; He had given infinite satisfaction to justice, to His Father, and therefore He owed nothing. The non-imputation of sin is destroyed. How can God say that a sinner is not a sinner? How can there be such a thing as not imputing aman's trespasses to him if the Lord Jesus, who is said to have been made sin by His Father for us, if He, that blessed One, rotted in the grave? The intercession of the Lord Jesus is not in heaven if He is not there. If Christ is not in heaven, how can He intercede? How can He, being dead, open His mouth for poor condemned sinners? I just name these doctrines beside others which could be named, such as eternal predestination and predestination to bear and wear the image of Jesus Christ. All these are destroyed if Christ remained and remains in the grave. Hold fast, as God may help, to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Remember what Paul said - "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." We build, not on fancies, not on contradictions, not on Christ remaining a prisoner in the grave. We build on a fact; we build on doctrine that has its foundation in the fact of Christ's Person, and the fact of His death, and the fact of His resurrection, and I would say to you, dear friends, to this congregation, that this wondrous truth is so attested in this Book, so attested in all documents that have any relation whatsoever to this Book and to the resurrection of Christ, that there is no proper room for any doubt about Paul's statement - "But now is Christ risen from the dead". We cannot afford to part with any gospel doctrine. What a mercy to believe that. The day is with us when you may be what you choose if you but be, as men would judge, sincere, but that is not the truth. There was no man more sincere than the Apostle Paul when he was persecuting Saul. When he was a good man he said this - I verily thought that I ought to do such things - that is, when he was dead in trespasses and sins and persecuting the Lord Jesus. If ever a man was sincere, the Apostle Paul was sincere when he was Saul of Tarsus, and hating Jesus Christ and persecuting Him in His saints. No, sincerity is not to be placed before the Lord as a reason for acceptance. It cannot take the place of Christ; it cannot take the place of any doctrine of Christ. He is necessary, He is essential in every part of Him, so to speak, and every act of His life and the greatest act of His death when He gave up the ghost. The Scripture is

beautiful in its order, very beautiful. I think sometimes I admire the Scripture more and more as I get older, and my meaning here is this. Take all this chapter, the constant assertion of Christ's death and its consequences, and on that Paul says - my brethren, "therefore". Mind your "therefores" in the Bible. "Therefore my beloved brethren be stedfast"; "be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The exhortation is well founded, very beautiful, very extensive. "Therefore", because Jesus is in heaven. He was in the grave, but He is in heaven. "Therefore", because He is there in the interests of His people, "my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast". Stedfastness is relative; it relates to something; it may be to a person. It is related here, it is related to Christ, Christ under a particular consideration. Be stedfast in the holding of the doctrine of His resurrection. Ah, a loose hold of this is no hold at all. A sinner may say, but I do not know that He has any interest in me, that I have an interest in Him, but I do believe that He was raised from the dead by the glory of His Father. Well, be stedfast in that, and wait on God in that, and ask Him to give you what He alone is able to give you, an assurance that Christ has an interest in you, that His eye is on you, that it runs too and fro through all your circumstances, and afflictions and conflicts and troubles, and doubts and fears; that His eye is never taken off you, that He has numbered the hairs of your head, and that nothing can happen to you without Him, without His permission, without His love, without His care. O what a Christ we have, what a lovely Saviour we have. What a marvellous Person we have and He is in heaven and there He will remain till the last day when time shall be no more and then He will come and open the graves of His people. Then that shall take place that is prophesied by Isaiah "Thy dead men shall live, with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust". Why? "The earth shall cast out her dead". Be stedfast in holding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Think, when this mortal frame shall be no more animated by our souls and life, when we shall be lowered into the grave, and when it may be said over the coffin "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth" that there then is given to the grave, not a property, but there is sown in it a seed, which means it shall rise. Be stedfast. How can

you hope for a better resurrection? How can you hope for a blessed immortality? How can you think of being in heaven with the Lord for ever and ever if Christ remained in the grave? Jesus said "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it". Then may we ask Him to give us an indubitable proof in our own consciences that He is in heaven, that He was raised by the glory of His Father from the dead. This Book is enough for a general credence and it demands it, and no man can deny it and be innocent, but for a living conscience one other attestation is necessary, not different from this, but the confirmation of this, an application of this, namely the testimony of God in your own soul and conscience that for you the Saviour died, for you He was raised again from the dead. One of the most wonderful things you can ever get in this world is a sight of Jesus Christ in heaven. Of Him, the Apostle says "whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus". O what a wonder. He could not be in two places at the same time, being a Man. He could not be in the grave and in heaven at the same moment, being a Man. His human nature is only in one place at the same time, the same instant. To see Him then in heaven is to have a testimony that He was raised from the dead. And moreover you may have another proof of that by this, to hear Him speak. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Saul, at that moment was believing that Christ was in the grave, that the story of His resurrection was a wicked fabrication of His disciples, but now that voice penetrates death and darkness and gives Saul the hearing ear and moves him to say - "Who art Thou Lord?" He heard the Lord's voice and this is very significant in the relation that the Apostle gives of that wondrous event later. The men, said he, that were with me, saw indeed the light but they heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me. Mind the voice, my friends; that gives demonstration. Does He speak? Does He say "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden" Does He say, when you are in fear and trouble - "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Does He say that He has graven you on the palms of His hands, that He will never forget you. Does He say that "this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee". The words are the words of a living Jesus in heaven; blessed words. And in another way you may know that He is in heaven, by the forgiveness of your sins. How could His blood avail you in that particular if He were in the grave? But when sin is

pardoned it is pardoned through a living Saviour. He entered heaven with His own blood, that is, with the infinite merit of His vicarious death. He entered heaven and there He presents this wondrous death of His in the merit of it to His Father. Be stedfast in this; that is the import of this beautiful word. My beloved brethren, be stedfast. Think of all that I have written to you, think of the assertion I have made that Christ is risen. Think of the terrible consequences of His not having been raised from the dead that I have laid before you, and be stedfast in the doctrine. How can you hope that one day your grave will be opened by the voice of the Saviour if He Himself did not rise from the dead. He will open graves, He will say to the sea, give up. From Adam to the last person who shall die and corrupt, Jesus Christ the omnipotent One shall say to the dead, arise; some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and confusion. To be stedfast in this will be, among other things, this - you will labour in it and on the ground of it. Oh it will give ground sometimes to your soul, to your faith, to your hope, to your love, when you can mention this before the Lord as that which you doubt not, as that that is under your foot. When you can say solidly in your spirit - I believe that Jesus Christ died and that He was raised again from the dead, and thus plead a risen Saviour in heaven before the Lord. Be stedfast in this. The devil may try to shake you off it; he may send a flood, dragon-like, after you, at the birth of every gracious feeling and every motion of your faith, but the Rock will hold you, and may you be stedfast, stedfast here. If I might say a word just at this moment, by the way, about this great doctrine, I would say now you consider this chapter, read it. It may read you, it may talk to you, it may speak sweetly in your heart, it may say - you have got a good ground to stand on, and a good God to go to, God in your own nature, nature now in heaven, glorified, and one day your poor body, now weak and dying, shall be just like that, His glorious body. Read of His resurrection, read how the Apostles with great power gave witness to His resurrection, and it may be a means in the hands of the Spirit of establishing you in this great doctrine. We can never be too much established. We may be shaken a good deal, and perhaps a shaking will be to our souls what the shaking of a tree is to its root; it may make you take fast hold and strike your faith deeper and deeper into the great truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

"Unmoveable". O, says the enemy, when he sees us trembling about something, I will move you, and he tries; he tries. We need to observe the exhortation the Holy Ghost gives to the saints by Peter - "Be sober, be vigilant, knowing that your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour". "Unmoveable". May the Lord help us to hold this fast as a great and essential truth. Christianity is not existing as a saving truth if Jesus is in the grave. May the Lord keep us from being shaken away from this, removed from this. "Unmoveable". Faith is a great grace and a stedfast grace, but it may be weak. It is weak in some of us; it is very weak in me. I do need that prayer to be prayed in my heart and by my heart. "Lord increase my faith". If you consider the greatness of the things you believe, if you consider the God you profess to believe in, if you consider the things that God has done, if you consider how He came to the virgin Mary and took the nature, the human nature that was begotten in her of the Holy Ghost, if you consider what that Man, joined to the eternal Son of God, came to do and did, if you consider how He was tempted of the devil, how He was a poor broken-hearted Man, how He was prone on the ground in that garden of Gethsemane, and how angels came to minister to Him, how He was taken to the Judgment Hall and there, in His humiliation, His judgment was taken away from Him, and how He gave up the ghost voluntarily, obeyed His Father in becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, I say, if you but consider the greatness of the things your faith is called upon to exercise itself on, you may see the need of a strong faith. I would be glad to have every day Flavel's little arms of faith. He speaks of the little arms of faith opening to embrace the Saviour. There is one thing will do it, the Saviour drawing near. A revealed Saviour always causes the little arms of faith to open, receive, and embrace Him. Be unmoveable here, that is to say - the Holy Ghost says it - My beloved brethren, beloved of God, born of the Spirit, dear to Jesus, be stedfast in the doctrine of His resurrection. Consider what hangs on it - everything. All that is good on earth, spiritually good, and all that is good in the hope of His saints for eternity.

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord". "Always abounding". Does your idleness of hands get a reproof here? Does the sluggard's bed ever lull you to sleep or at any rate say 'A little more sleep and

a little more slumber and a little folding of the hands'. And does your poverty here strike you, and do you say, I hardly can be said to work at all much less to abound in it. What is this work? It is the labour of love, it is the work of faith, which God is not unrighteous to forget. This comprises a good deal. First of all it comprises the motions of faith, the real motions of faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin". Whatever you do without faith has that stamped on it. The sight of all faithless works may make us ashamed. Indeed, you cannot count all your faithless works can you? It is no use my trying even to begin to count mine. But there are some works of faith as when you go out to say "Lord have mercy on me", "God be merciful to me a sinner", and when your faith goes to the cross and enables you to say

Here would I fix and comfort take
Jesus died for sinners' sake

And when your faith goes out to His resurrection and says to the Almighty, I believe that Thou didst raise Thy dear Son Jesus Christ from the dead and I wish I could believe it more stedfastly and draw more life and comfort from it. And when you go by faith and ask the Lord to be with you in all your undertakings, in your business matters and your difficulties, and in your families and in all the relationships you sustain in life - the work of faith is in these things. When there is real prayer and crying to God when you say perhaps to Him, Lord put a bar, a block in my way where I am tempted and disposed to turn aside. Who knows the value of those two things that the Lord says He will put in the way of His people going wrong. I will put a hedge of thorns about her. Yea, He says, I will build a wall of hewn stones; she shall not find her paths. Now faith, when you have got it in exercise, will bring you to this - Lord, guide me. "Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee". This work of faith will always have one great object and centre - do not forget it - and I will, this evening, by the help of God press it on your attention, namely the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. O I should like for myself and for you that, what seemed to be a very particularly sweet light falling into my heart this morning as I read this word, that the Lord would cause it to remain and grow and be the same in you. We should abound then in this work. "Always

abounding in the work of the Lord" - praying, believing, loving, hoping, and following hard after Him.

My brethren, we believe in a living God. Think of it, just reflect, believe in a living God. "There be gods many and there be lords many" and of them the Lord said, by Jeremiah, - Be not afraid of them; they cannot do good, neither can they do evil. Think of this. You believe, you profess to believe, in the living God - "God only wise". Now abound in this belief. This is what the Spirit says - Abound in this work of faith; always abounding in it. O, but there are difficulties! Yes, indeed there are. The Scripture speaks of the saints as being soldiers, and soldiers are not called to play but to fight. "Fight the good fight of faith". It is not going to be easy; getting to heaven is not easy. It is easy to the Spirit, but not easy to the man of God in whom the Spirit is, because he is flesh as well as Spirit, and much more flesh to his own sense at times than Spirit.

He is always abounding in this work - prayer, the prayer of faith, prayer that goes out without a word, prayer that may be more effectual when you cannot speak than when you do speak. The heaving of a sigh, the sighing out of an unutterable groan, the motion of the Spirit, the guidance of the Spirit, the influence of the Spirit, spoken of as "praying in the Holy Ghost". O what a good thing it is to have an object when you pray, yea two objects. One is God and the other is what you want. Real prayer is just simply, this, if I may use the word "simply" here, asking for the things you feel you need. We want ever so many things we do not need and we may ask many things and not get them because we ask amiss. But when you have got a real case, a bad heart, vile feelings, horrible corruptions, innumerable sins in your mind - get all this and a tempting devil too, and circumstances that make it difficult for you to move this way or that - O then to pray, then to go to God, then to press your suit and bring and urge this one plea, this blessed plea that never can fail in heaven's court. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it".

And the Apostle Paul gives them a reason for this in themselves. The grand reason is in the Person and the resurrection of Christ, but he gives them a reason in themselves for this. "Forasmuch as ye know

that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Now how can you know this? How can I know that my labour is not in vain? In two ways to be brief. Two ways will embrace all the ways that you may have in your mind at times. First, because your gracious, risen Saviour has told you in His Word that whatsoever ye shall ask, believing ye shall receive. He has told you that if ye ask anything in His Name He will do it. What a ground that is; O what a ground it is. Hang about Him, brethren, hang about Him; go on seeking Him. May not a poor minister who has had some reason to be encouraged say this to you. Wait on Him. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me". O, a full promise will hold you and draw you and sometimes greatly encourage you to pray. And the second thing is this, the answers that you may already have in your souls. I think one of the brightest jewels that a person can have from heaven, locked up in his own heart, is an answer to prayer with regard to some spiritual thing. I say spiritual, because you may have many answers to prayer as to providence and never be united to the Lord Jesus. Many a raven cries and gets food. All God's creatures wait on Him and He feeds them. There are many natural prayers that get answers, natural answers. Therefore, I say, advisedly, spiritual things. Has He subdued some iniquity? Has He given you some word of promise? Has He spoken the gospel into your heart? Has He made known His beloved Son to you? Has He given you what you have asked for at times, a little communion with Himself? Has He blessed you with spiritual repentance, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? You may look at these things and say, I laboured for them, I wrought hard, I prayed, I begged, and urged and pleaded. I have waited; sometimes I thought I must give all up because I did not get answers immediately, but I waited. Then you know, in that experimental, gracious way, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. And what will that say? It will say this - He that has helped me hitherto, the God who bent His ear, inclined His ear unto me, the Holy Spirit who brought Jesus to me, brought forgiveness to my conscience, love to my heart, peace to my soul, that God will help me through. And the Psalmist has a word to this point; he says - "This God" - O there is an emphasis to be laid on it - "This God is our God for ever and ever and He will be our Guide even unto death". And then, after death - O, the prospect that sometimes you may get before your faith, the blessed prospect. "We know not what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall

see Him as He is". That is to say, He is in heaven ; the grave could not hold Him, the chains of death could not detain Him a prisoner. He was loosed from the pains of death, loosed from them and now in heaven glorified. Says faith in the heart, you are going to be like Him. The Man Christ Jesus in heaven shall put the likeness of His very Person upon every believer at the resurrection, and then we shall receive the thing done in our body. The good things, the prayers, the tears, the faith, the hope, the love, and everything that was wrought by the Spirit, all, all shall be crowned with this crown of glory, this blessed reward of grace.

Now my brethren, I have brought before you this great, this cardinal, this essential doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May the Holy Ghost put it into your hearts and into my heart from time to time, that we may know we have good ground to look forward to a blessed eternity.

AMEN.