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Evening Sermon MS 148

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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 2 November 1919

1 Corinthians 3 v 11

"For other foundation can no man lay than
that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"

The occasion of these words is instructive and full of warning. The Corinthian church had quickly got into a bad case; evils broke out, corruption had the mastery over some and grave divisions came. And the Apostle was inspired to write this Epistle and the following one to this people, and he tells them that he was not able to write to them as writing to spiritual people. They were so injured by the things which had fallen out among them as that they had become like children, carnal people even; that they were not in a condition to receive the spiritual instruction which he, an Apostle, was capable of imparting. He wrote to them as to carnal people and not spiritual. But God took occasion of this to move and instruct the Apostle to write a great foundation truth, and then also to warn every minister, both them and all who should come afterwards, respecting building. The foundation is laid; other foundation cannot be laid; the foundation is Jesus Christ. That is fixed, settled. Builders are ministers; ministers build; and the Apostle would have every sent minister to be most careful as to what he builds on this blessed, this immovable foundation. For if he should build gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, he would suffer loss. The day is coming when all his work would be tried and a fire should be put to his work and what was not gold, silver, precious stones, should be burnt up, and he, the minister, would suffer loss; loss of comfort, loss of peace, loss of reputation as a minister of Jesus Christ. He should suffer great loss and the church would suffer loss. And this, if opened to us, beloved friends, will make us very cautious and the effect on me as it may be opened will be this; it will make me very cautious as to what I build on a good foundation. It will make you very cautious as to what you hear and how, as Christ

said - "Take heed what ye hear; take heed how ye hear" Do not receive everything. Implicit trust as to all you hear is not becoming. Put everything to the test. Try all you hear by the great touchstone and if anything is built by the minister, or brought to you as being good, take heed and see that it is gold, silver, precious stones. This, I would repeat, should have a good and solemnising effect upon our spirits especially in this day, especially seeing how that the devil is angry and gone out into the world and is propagating every sort of error, and pleasing religion is very much in evidence. Be careful as to what you hear; be careful how you hear.

Now leaving that, the immediate occasion of the text and the warning that arises out of it, may we be enabled this morning to look at this foundation and the laying. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. This foundation has to bear a great building that shall not be taken down. The building of human nature of all the human race was on one man, Adam, and he fell and corrupted himself and all his future race. A new heaven and a new earth God will build and for this new building He will have a new foundation and that foundation is the Person and the work of Christ. He, the eternal Son of God, the very Son of Man, perfect in His deity, perfect in His humanity, one Person, is the foundation, that Rock on which the Lord will found and build His Church, His people. It is a wonderful foundation; it has humanity in it, because God saves poor men. It has deity in it because humanity alone is not sufficient. And this blessed foundation God has exhibited in the Scripture; He has laid it by His own hand.

The laying of it we will notice in two particulars; firstly as it is the work of God from eternity; secondly, as it is laid in every individual Christian's heart, so as to become experimentally the foundation on which each child of God builds.

First, this foundation was laid by the hand of God Himself in the counsel of peace, in the eternal choice of Christ to be the only foundation on which the Church should be built. In the

chapter I read this morning in Isaiah (28 v 16) God Himself says "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone (the Rock that Peter confessed) a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation:" Tried it was to be indeed, deeply tried; tried by God Himself; tried by devils; tried by men; tried by the wrath of God, by the grace of God, by the law of God. A precious corner stone that should unite to itself and to each other every stone in the building; all should be bonded and held together by this precious corner stone, a sure foundation, never to be moved; the sure mercies of David never to be forfeited. And he that believeth shall not be ashamed. This is the foundation that is laid. "I lay" it says God. Men do not choose Christ first; God chose Him first. God laid Him in Zion first of all. What an infinite mercy it is that salvation is sure in this respect, as in all others, because it is God's work. I lay this foundation in Zion, this tried precious corner stone. This is evident in the Scriptures; the whole of the Word of God discovers it. Go back to Genesis 49 v 24 and there you find it is written: "From thence (that is from the God of Jacob) is the shepherd, the stone of Israel". Jacob, when he was blessing Joseph, prayed that the blessings of the God of Jacob might be on him. He said "From thence is the shepherd the stone of Israel" that is Jesus Christ, the foundation, comes from the God of Jacob. And if our eyes are opened to see this truth we shall see that which expresses the highest wisdom of God, the deepest love of God, the sweetest mercy of God, the greatest act of God in all His works. This stands alone; it stands above all others. There is no work that God ever did or will do that shall stand by the side of this for greatness, for wisdom, for love, for mercy, for power. But I apprehend that in the text the Apostle has special and immediate reference to experience, that it is not the eternal counsel of God in this matter that he immediately has in view, but rather the experience of a foundation and the act of building that he has before him and sets before us. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid". Now he declares that he himself had that. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation." I, an Apostle, have taught, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus

Christ is the foundation on which the Church is built. Now you may see, just to set this point forth as I may be helped from the Scripture, you will see, in his teaching, that this is so, that he utterly excludes every other place, stone, rock and all things that men would naturally go to, to build upon, and will have nothing to do with them, or say to them, because there is only one foundation, that is the Lord Jesus in His Person and in His work. Now there is a solemn Scripture which I would bring to your notice in the Hebrews, where the Apostle says that "the Word of God is quick", living and powerful, "and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do". Now what is that in experience but a solemn searching and testing of every person brought under the light and truth of the Scriptures by the Holy Ghost, until each shall see and feel himself to be so searched and so discovered to himself in the very centre of his being, the marrow of his bones, the thoughts and intents of his heart. The whole of the creature as fallen, shall be so exhibited to himself as that he shall come to feel - well, in myself there is nothing but evil, nothing but death, nothing but corruption, and that is the intent, the purpose of God in searching people. The same spirit and work is set forth in Zephaniah 1 v 12 where the Lord says He will search Jerusalem with candles, bring things to light. Not by a general light in religion, but by a particular teaching of the Holy Spirit; and the same in the chapter I read - Isaiah 28 v 8 - "All tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean". Just the same spirit in which the Lord works with power to bring a creature to see himself, to feel himself to be a lost person, to be without any ground on which he may stand in himself. Well, this is very solemn; it does not belong to the first work only, but goes on and on. I dare say that I speak the experience of some here with grey hairs like myself, when I say that it is an experience that grows. It widens, deepens. Men must go down. There is a lot of sand in us that needs to be dug through until

the rock is reached. This we like not to believe and feel, but believe and feel we must as we go on. O it is a solemn thing. Well now, when you get that vision - says the Apostle in the same Scripture in the Hebrews, seeing then we are searched out creatures, discovered to ourselves as having nothing but evil, and that all this evil is before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do - seeing, nature would say; seeing, the law would say - You have nothing but wickedness, therefore despair. "No" says the Holy Ghost in the gospel. "Seeing then that"- we, being what we are, and notwithstanding that we are such and such, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest" such a Saviour, such a foundation, let us draw near. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace". And there you have nothing less than this foundation. It is well laid. Take the Apostle's own experience in the next place. He says - I am a Jew; I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews; touching the law I was blameless; I acquired much: I went beyond many mine equals in religion and in all this I have much to boast of. If any man has anything, I more. What then? O, he says, in effect, this is sand, this is mud, mire, dung, dross, loss; that is all. Well, but if he thus is in himself, how can he stand for eternity. O he says I own one thing and to get the knowledge of that I lose all else - the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. There is the ground, there is the ground of his hope for eternity. Do not expect to miss searching if God will bless you. Do not expect to get better if God will bless you. And if you are searched and if you are searched so as to come to self despair, bless God for it. You may often be saying, I never thought I should be this; I never thought I had that in my heart; I never thought I should be what I am today. I can say that, I do say it in sincerity, I never expected to be the sinner I am now. But what does this lead to, despair? Not where the Holy Ghost is, for He says "Look to Jesus". That is just what the Apostle Paul did. He says - I follow after, I run after Him who is my Lord, my Head, my ground, my only stone, precious corner stone. I go after Him if that I may apprehend Him, lay hold of Him and build upon Him. That is the foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid". Men reject Him; we naturally do quite as much as others;

but faith approves Him well; seeks to Him and comes eventually to be glad of the searching and the testing and the removal of things and the digging through the sand in order that the building may be well founded so that when the rains come and the winds blow and both of them beat upon the house, it shall stand and suffer no loss. That which Christ said shall be made known in the soul "On this Rock will I build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

Now a word about the laying of this foundation experimentally. We have seen that it is Christ, and we have seen that the Apostle Paul distinctly, as an Apostle, laid the foundation. Now let us look at the matter experimentally. Here is a sinner. O it is a solemn thing, it is a solemn thing to be a sinner, yet I do wish all of you under God's rich teaching and mercy might come to be sinners. I wish it may please God to bless you young people with the knowledge of sin. You would not say then - O it is too gloomy and heavy. You would say - I understand now why it was he insisted upon people knowing themselves. How can you renounce yourself if you do not know yourself? How can you abandon yourself as a sinner if you are not discovered to yourself as a sinner? You must be lost; you must have experience of being lost in order to come to this great point of having nothing in yourself but mud, mire, filth, corruption, death. This is one of the best of all things we have, a spirit to utterly renounce self, to entirely give up self, to hate the garments spotted by the flesh. Then this mercy comes and the Holy Ghost brings this mercy in this way, namely He discovers Christ to faith, and He lays Christ in the soul by His own merciful teaching and power. He lays Him in the soul which the Apostle Paul expresses in this word - "Christ in you the hope of glory"; which he expresses also in the Ephesians "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith". How can Christ be in a sinner without the Holy Ghost? "Wherefore I give you" says Paul in this Epistle "to understand" "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12 v 3). No man can lay his hand on his heart and look to heaven and say I believe that Jesus is the Son of God,

but by the Holy Ghost. And when a sinner can say that, then this foundation is laid in Him. O what an amazing mercy for a poor wretched creature to be enabled to say from his heart - I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Then he had been ignorant of it. How the eunuch confessed his ignorance. He had been reading of Him, as we might have been reading of Him any day, but he had not seen Him and did not understand who it was of whom he was reading until Philip, in the power of the Holy Spirit, preached unto him Jesus, when that eunuch received that blessed Person, Jesus Christ; and that blessed Person was then laid in that man's soul. That is how you must know Him for salvation; that is the revelation of Him, a distinct manifestation of Christ. In some greater, in others lesser is the degree, but in all alike this very Person Jesus Christ is so manifested as that faith receives Him and makes that confession. Just the same with Peter - "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" Said Peter "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art Thou Simon Bar-jona" said Christ to him. This has been revealed to thee by My Father which is in heaven. And on this Rock which thou hast confessed, this Rock which is now in thee, I will build My church. Now my brethren, look at this great point in religion. You say you have not attained to much. Well that may be true, but if you have attained to this, you have attained to a great deal. "Other foundation can no man lay". Has this been laid in you? O what an infinite mercy. A light to shine on Christ's Person so that you, in that shining, saw Him as you had never seen Him before; that is a great mercy. That is what Paul teaches in the 2 Epistle to the Corinthians chapter 4 v 6 where he says - "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is there. Now when this foundation is laid in this way that I have set before you out of the Word of God, then building may go on. No man can properly build a hope of heaven until he has had revealed in Him Jesus Christ. I say it again to you, dear friends, no man can properly build a hope of heaven until Jesus Christ has been revealed in him. As the Father revealed Christ to Peter, to the eunuch, so He must reveal Him to you or you cannot properly build

for eternity. Now when you do get this knowledge, when you do have this sweet revelation, then building may go on, and here we need the caution. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon".

Now, for instance, you may and you will build a hope of answers to prayer when you build on this foundation. "If ye ask anything in My Name". You look at it my friends - anything in My Name, I will do it. Now this will put down so to speak all the objections you may ever feel with respect to your sinfulness. You may legally look at yourself at times, at your conduct as before God I mean, because we may be quite straight among men. You may look, as I often do, at your spirit, pride, enmity, wickedness, covetousness, worldliness and many many evils within and then you say I cannot, I ought not to expect God to bless me. If you say that is your experience I say, let us walk together, for it is mine. But is that the spirit of the gospel, the spirit of Christ? No; the spirit of Christ, the spirit of faith, will lead you to see a beauty in this - Your agreement with death, your covenant with hell shall be broken (Isaiah 28 v 28) and I will lay in Zion for you a foundation. (Isaiah 28 v 16). Take these two verses together. What a hell is in one; what a heaven is in the other. Men may be in agreement with death and make a covenant with hell; God coming and disannulling all that and then saying O now you who are wicked enough to do so, here is a foundation. Says Christ, ask in My Name. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name". Ask for a broken heart; ask for forgiveness of sins; ask for the coming of Christ to you; ask for a sensible union with Him; ask that He would bring you honourably to your grave; ask that He would give you the peace of God in your conscience through the blood of Jesus Christ, and I will do it. The foundation of this hope of answers to prayer is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ known to you and manifested to you, so as that in your own heart you can say, now I do look to no other, expect good from no other, hope for access to God through no other than Jesus Christ. O well it is a great thing to be brought to this point, to ask in the Name of Christ. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name". I would like just to hang

about this for a moment or two because prayer is the Christian's vital breath. In prayer he comes to God; in prayer he is a beggar; in prayer he is a confessor; in prayer he is a waiting person and how shall all these great things be in a sinner unless there be a proper foundation for them. And what can a proper foundation for them be save our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you pray? Now what is the ground on which you stand when you pray? Do you pray for forgiveness of all these dreadful things which stand up to your view till you are ashamed beyond expression and are cast down so greatly as to wonder why God has allowed you to live? O but see this mercy is greater, the blood of Christ is greater than all our sins. "The blood of Christ thy soul can cure". And if thou dost venture to pray in the Name of Jesus, then thou standeth on a rock with respect to prayer, and have every good reason, the best reason that God can Himself give to you, to expect an answer to your prayer.

Now I think that this one point is an amazingly great one and a sweet one to all who are brought to realise it. We cannot, if we are born again, do without God. We cannot do without prayer; there is no doing without it really. Well then here is the way. "Other foundation can no man lay". What have you to plead? Nothing except this, and this is quite sufficient; the Son of God manifested to take away your sins; the Lord Jesus Christ manifested in your soul and, as it were, putting Himself for you to stand upon in petition, as the church of old did when she said - "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself; so will not we go back from Thee. Quicken us and we will call upon Thy Name". If you notice that Psalm you will see how there was not a shred of anything for the people to take hold of. There was not any ground for them to stand upon with respect to themselves before God till they reached the Man at God's right hand. Then their faith gathered boldness and they, in their desolation and ruin, said - Lord if Thou wilt deal with Jesus Christ with respect to us Thy terror shall not make us afraid. We will not go back from Thee; we will continue calling on Thy Name. You see the same spirit of faith in Jehoshaphat who said - "Lord, we

have no might to deal with this great company that cometh against us. We have sinned; but our eyes are up unto Thee, the God of mercy. " We have nothing, my friends, but that. There is nothing between us and despair, nothing between us and hell, save Jesus Christ. There is nothing between us and despair respecting answers to prayer, save Jesus Christ. O you may be greatly tried about prayer, your unworthiness, your wanderings in prayer, your unfitness, your ignorance. You may be much tried about prayer, but every time Christ is made known in your heart by the Spirit then you will find yourself with fresh courage moving onward to God. With fresh courage you will say "For Christ's sake". With fresh courage you will look for answers from Him to whom you pray in that all prevailing, that sweet, all precious Name of Jesus Christ. "Other foundation" for prayer then "can no man lay than that is laid, Jesus Christ". O if you are near hell in your feelings, you will go to heaven. If you feel shut up sometimes when you regard yourself as a sinner, the moment you see Christ you will find an opening in your spirit. If you feel the corruptions of your nature ready to break out in some dreadful form, when you find the Lord is set before you, then you have new courage, new boldness, and larger petitions will go from your spirit.

Now may the Lord help us to look at this. I wont touch any other point this morning. This is the foundation for prayer, the only foundation. I declare no other, yea I would rather say I denounce every other thing you may have, think to stand upon, when you go to God. Not my poverty? No, for your poverty is your sin. Not my enemies? No, for your sin has brought them against you. Not my weakness? No, for that is your sin. Only Christ, only His Name, His Person and His blessed work, and may the Lord give us more and more distinctly to see and believe and feel this by precious faith.

AMEN.