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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton, on Sunday morning 22 February
1925

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4 verse 20

"For the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power"

Very grievous sins and irregularities had broken out in this very favoured Church at Corinth and when the Apostle, inspired so to do, reproved for this, for this sin and these irregularities, they were puffed up. The factions into which they were divided, each one claiming an Apostle, and some claiming to be Christs, these factions bore their bitter fruit, and part of that bitter fruit was the despising of the Apostle. They were prating; they were puffed up against him, and had a great show in the flesh. He tells them, that when he wrote to them, he could not, on account of their carnal state, write to them, as spiritual, but as carnal, because they were walking as men, not as true children of God. Not as real christians. It is good when we are made jealous of self, lest we ourselves fall into the snare of the devil. He tells them how to account of him. A man, he said, they should account of him as a steward of the mysteries of God. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God". And it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. Here is the whole scope and end of the ministry. The mysteries of God, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and everything outside these mysteries of God - Christ Incarnate, Christ crucified, Christ the conqueror of death, Christ the anointed Priest, and the crowned king, everything outside these mysteries, is of the flesh, and will never be honoured of God. What a mercy it is when it pleases God to enable any of His servants to regard this exceedingly important scripture. Let a man so account of us and let the ministers so account of themselves, as stewards of the mysteries of Christ. They are judged

but he said it was a small thing for him to be judged of them or of men, because God is judge, for I know nothing by or against myself. But even that conscious sense of being faithful is not my justification. It is not for a steward to justify himself but his master who has made him a steward, and put the mysteries into his ministry, to judge him. I judge not myself, yet may I not hereby justify Him? He that judges me is the Lord. This justification is not justification of a sinner, but the judging of one according to the discharge of his trust. If he has been faithful to his trust, God will judge him so. And, if he has been unfaithful, God will judge him so. But he is not to be his own judge as a steward, but One who has made him a steward is his judge. And now, though this people were puffed up, and making a great show in the flesh, he says to them the Kingdom of God is not in word. You may fret, you may flourish a great deal, but the Kingdom of God is something different from that. Different from that that is in the flesh. The Kingdom of God is in power. The kingdom of men is in word mostly. The Kingdom of God is in His own power. Now in the kingdom there are these things to be considered. First, the King in His authority, and this is indeed vital. We have a King of kings, and Lord of lords. He doeth His will in the armies of heaven and among the children of men, whose hand none can stay, and to whom none can say "What doest Thou?" "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven" This respects immediately the authority, the rule, the management, the overlordship of everything in creation, and especially in Zion. Hence, we read of the Son given, of the Child born, and of His great Names, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace"; that of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. He shall always rule. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion endureth throughout all generations. And what a King. Unto the King Eternal, the eternal God incarnate, a Priest, a crowned Priest, who having died, being crucified through weakness, now liveth

after the power of God, says, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" King of the fiery furnace, King to change the word of an earthly king, King to remove the fire and the heat, and the security and the destructive power of the burning fiery furnace. King to close the mouths of lions. O what a King. King to subdue the idolatry of our hearts and make Himself the only object of worship and of trust. King over providential things. King to manage our matters. King to say in His power, put these things into My hand and I will manage. King to bring good out of evil, life out of death, light out of darkness, and to make crooked things straight, and rough places plain. This is our King. Yes, some of us have had His Kingly authority made known in our hearts, and some sins that have threatened to destroy us have been broken, as to their dominion, and we believe will be destroyed eternally. Some lusts, some abominations in our hearts have been put down. He has put down all rule and all authority and power. We have a King, and He has said in our hearts "I will be thy King, where is there any other that may save thee."

A kingdom also, in the next place, has respect to subjects over whom the King reigns, and likewise thirdly, a kingdom is for an end. The rule of the King is for the good of His subjects, or, in other words, vital religion, which is in the text, really has in it three things. First, the author of it, second, the subject of it, and third, the end of it. And this kingdom is not in word, nor in outward show, but in power. The kingdom of God is within. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. He does not cry, He does not lift up His voice - this, our King, but He rules, He reigns, the author of vital religion. Let us see, as the Lord may help us, a little into this. The author - Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. The distinction between the living and the dead, is, that the former possesses faith and the dead is just a dead thing. The distinction between worship and worship, true and false, is that, by faith, the living worship God in spirit and in truth, and the dead follow some idol - either of self or some other thing.

And the difference between a kingdom in word, and the kingdom of power is, that there is a form, in the former only. And in the latter there is a living power. And this author is our Lord Jesus, and the Father in Him, and the Spirit from Him, being in Him also. This God is our God for ever and ever. He speaks, and the dead hear His voice. He touches and the mountains of sin flow down at His presence. He shines, and the blind see. He heals the broken hearted. He gathers wounded sinners to Himself. He invites them to come to Him for rest, and for peace and for salvation. He tells them that He is their God, that He has redeemed them, not with corruptible things as silver and gold from their vain conversation, but by His own precious blood. And this blood is life. The life is in the blood. And the blood of Jesus Christ sets up an authority, a power, a rule, a union with God, that can never be expressed. Sin separates and is death. Blood unites, and is life. It gives new union, better, more intimate, blessed union, than we had in our first creation. The blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is our King, my friends. King Jesus. And O the happy moments which are felt, when He reigns in the heart. The blessedness that is felt when it pleases Him to come and speak. There is no lust, no sin, no idolatry, no devil, no hardness, no impenitence, can stand before the touch and smile of this great King. O, honours rest on Him. On His head are many crowns. He has a sword, and He is a Mighty One. He is to ride, and does ride victoriously, conquering and to conquer. Ah, it is a great thing to know this King. A great thing to see Him. "My tongue" said the Psalmist, "is the pen of a ready writer, I will speak of the things which I have made, touching the King." He spoke of His power; he spoke of His lips. He said grace was poured into His lips. He spoke of His sword and He said ride victoriously and overcome thine enemies. This is the King and when this, our King, had been crucified and buried and was raised again, appeared to His disciples, He said, on the eve of His departing from them to take possession of the kingdom in His own

Name, and in their name and for all of them, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" and we see by what He did when He was a Man of Sorrows, sojourning here, what He is able to do, and will do, spiritually. He spake to death "Lazarus come forth" and to those who were bearing the body of the dead son, the only support of his mother, when he stopped them He said "young man I say unto thee arise". King of death. Well then, whatever death you have, whatever death you may feel, this King can speak to, and take away. He spoke to needy people. He spoke to a few loaves and made enough of them to feed five thousand men besides women and children. He spoke as a King. As a King he turned water into wine, so that it was said the best wine was left till the last. Yea, He spoke to diseases. Lepers were healed, blind eyes were opened, dumb tongues were unloosed, poor cripples were made whole. All, under the authority of this King. And may it not be said that these things were just so many illustrations and sweet effulgencies of His power, saying to all who should be troubled spiritually with diseases and with death, here is one who can, and who will, heal you. He is King of glory, to give glory to all His subjects. He will give every poor sinner who has faith in His name, the glory of justification, the glory of sanctification, the glory of adoption into the family of God. He will give this glory to every needy, broken down, bankrupt sinner. He is King of all captives to give them liberty. He is anointed to do it. To preach good tidings to the poor and needy, yea, to say to the captives come forth. He proclaims liberty to them, and liberty from sin and guilt by His blood. Liberty from all kinds of affliction He proclaims. This is the King, whom I would name to you. O if only I had a tongue to speak, to speak worthily of this King, so as that your hearts might be attracted to Him, through the power of the Holy Ghost, I should be glad. He is the King, King of kings, King on His glorious throne. O happy subjects who are enabled to say to Him Thine are we, Thou Son of God" O they said - are we,

Lord Jesus? For when this King makes war, He is there, the Lamb; He has with Him many who are called, and faithful and chosen. If you have faith to put your trust under the shadow of the wings of this Mighty One, no evil shall come to you. If you can make Him your habitation and your hope through blessed faith, no pestilence, no death, no confusion, shall come near to you.

Now in the next place, the Kingdom of God, has respect to the subjects of it. Vital religion has subjects, and let us look, as enabled, at these subjects. If the King is so great, well people might say, surely the people who are His subjects are wonderful people. And so they are. But let us look at them before they become His subjects in manifestation. What are they? Who are they? Well, what are they? They are dead sinners. Dead in trespasses and sins. They are enemies. Enemies in their minds by wicked works. They are aliens, alienated from the life of God through ignorance and wicked works. They are bitter enemies, nay they are enmity itself. The carnal mind is enmity against God. They are in the world. They are children of wrath even as others. No flesh is to glory in God's presence. And these people are but poor wretched enemies to God and goodness. And now the Lord, the King comes. He sends His good Spirit to them. He comes, that Spirit comes, to them, and sees them in their blood and death. It is a time of love. And He spreads the skirt of Christ over them, and He says "live". And the Son of God says "live", for the Father hath given Him to have life that He may give it to whomsoever He will. The hour has come, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, live. Regeneration makes an alien a friend, in principle, though not in feeling. Regeneration takes the prey from the mighty. It takes a dead creature, and makes a living subject of Christ, of him. It takes an enemy, and turns him into a subject, a willing subject. Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power. O sinner, if you are called by grace, there has been given to you, new life. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish" What a wonder that one who a

minute before said his lips were his own and asked "Who is Lord over me"? the next minute says "Woe is me for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" and the reason for the change is this "for mine eyes have seen the Lord" They have seen the King, the King in His glory, in His power, in His beauty, in His majesty, and so seeing Him, they have crumbled and shrivelled and shrunk into their own nothingness, and have felt woe is me, woe is me. The sight of the glorious God always turns all who see it into corruption as to their beauty. Always makes them feel their wretchedness. They all feel their sins when they see Him. This runs right through with every child of God, so that the clearer his vision of the King in His beauty the deeper his conviction of his sinfulness. That will always be a real truth, a living principle, in every one of you blessed with grace. Every vision of faith of the King will be, in one effect of it, a deeper conviction of your own corruption, Therefore do not be surprised, if you grow in a sense of your vileness. Indeed, you will grow so, as the Lord is gracious to you. I knew not half of my sinfulness in my early days. I do not know much now, but what I know now greatly exceeds what I knew in early days. I do find this, and you will find it with me, that the nearer the Lord comes to you, to show you Himself and the beauties, and excellencies, and suitableness to you, the more you will sink. You will go down and down and lower and lower, and illustrate in your own experience, that word of John the Baptist, "He must increase I must decrease."

Now the authority or the dominion of our King is displayed in these things following. First it is displayed with regard to the dominion of sin. You will never lose the being of sin while you are in this world, but you will get rid of the dominion of it, by the power of King Jesus. It will not reign in you. You will feel it; it will wriggle and wrestle; it will argue and thrust upon your attention many reasons why you should indulge it. It will promise you good things, as the devil

promised Eve, but the Lord will not allow it to have dominion. The man in whom sin's dominion is not broken, is dead in sin, but he in whom the dominion of sin is broken, is under the rule of grace, that is, of Christ, and the grace that was poured into His lips He has begun to pour into that man's heart. He comes and claims the man for himself. He comes and claims the heart for His throne, and says, sin must depart as to its dominion. This is one certain thing in the kingdom of our God, that sin is not reigning there. There is no room for two kings on one throne, and if your heart is to be the throne of Christ, then sin shall be dethroned and cast out. O yes, corruption of sin on the throne of Christ is an impossible thing. Therefore, dearly beloved friends, see if this is wrought in you. Has this King broken the dominion and authority of sin? How does He do it? He takes the attraction of sin away. Sin wont attract a person to whose eyes is revealed the glory of Christ. The excellencies of the Saviour will put all the imagined excellencies of sin away. Ah yes, you wont reluctantly let go, that lust, and be delivered from that idol against your will. You will find that word true "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." And O how gladly you will part with things to which naturally you cleave with all your might. How gladly you will part with them, when the Lord Jesus comes near to you, and is your King. And this is in power, it is not in word. It is not a lot of boastful things. We wont do this, and we will have that. It is just a touch of His glorious power. It is the pouring out into the soul of His heavenly grace. It is drawing the sinner to His footstool, to His heavenly throne, supplicating, asking, entreating, arguing, and begging that the grace that is in Christ may be given to the sinner. Gladly you will come, gladly you will feel, and thankfully and reverentially you will worship this King when He comes in His beauty. It is a beautiful thing to perceive that you are enabled, not reluctantly, as I said, but most willingly and heartily, to part with this sin, and all sin, as the Lord Jesus Christ draws near to you. What a King He

is. Yea, He gets the heart, He requires all the heart or nothing. And then when He has touched the sinner, when the grace in His lips has, in a measure, been poured out into the sinner's heart, that sinner says "Here's my heart Lord, take and seal it" and the wonder is to that sinner that this Lord should desire his heart. Yea, He will have it, as a resting place, and a throne. Here will I dwell for I have desired it.

Then His Kingly authority is manifested in and by the bringing and sprinkling of His precious blood on the conscience. O yes, sin has separated between us and God, and the blood of Jesus brings us near. "Made nigh by the blood of Christ" It is that connecting link, it is that wonderful power, that can never be expressed, and, as felt, that brings a sinner into union with God. It takes away all his sins, separating sins, killing guilt. It takes all away, and brings the sinner nigh. Here then is this great authority, that the conscience that has been so afflicted and burdened with dead works, is relieved of that burden, healed of that sickness, cured of that dreadfulness of sin, and is brought into sweet peace. And here it is, I believe, when a sinner has some experience of that sweet scripture, bringing into captivity of every thought unto the obedience of Christ, and the obedience of faith is the sweet obedience that the Lord Jesus will have and does obtain when He comes thus to His people. Yea, even a distant sight of this blood will procure that in the soul. You will want to feel its power when you see it by faith. You will perceive how efficacious it is before the Lord, and then you will want to feel it to be efficacious in your own conscience. You believe it removed all sin from the church, then you will want to feel it remove all sin from your own conscience. You will believe that, by it, the unworthiest get access to the Father, and then you will want that access in your own experience. You will believe that it brings near the most rebellious of sinners, and then you will want that blessed experience in your own soul. This is the kingdom of God over sin. Mind this point. It is not a sort

of idea. It is not some notion floating in the brain. It is some sweet sense of the efficacy of that blood over all your sin, guilt, death, and everything that interferes with your peace, the peace of God. This is the kingdom, and this Kingdom is seen in the authority of the King over the devil. Let us see how this kingdom began, in earliest days of the world's history. Adam sinned, Adam was called guilty before God his maker and law-giver. Now God spake to the serpent, and exerted His authority there, declared His power. He said, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shall eat all the days of thy life on earth. He said I will put enmity between thy seed and the seed of the woman. It shall bruise thy head. O who can stand against the King who thus speaks to the serpent? Then He spoke to the subjects of this Kingdom, Adam and Eve, and He made unto them coats of skins, sacrifices offered, skins made into coats, to justify them, or to typify that righteousness they should wear and did wear wrought out for them by Jesus Christ. They became the subjects of this King, soon after their rebellion against Him. He came and reclaimed them, and brought them into a closer, more intimate, more wonderful, more beautiful and more endearing union with Himself. O the power of the blood that brought them near, the power of the blood that removed their sin, the power of the righteousness of Christ that took away all their sin and guilt and made them, unjust persons, just. Put them straight with God's requirements, made them really just. We see it in Abel. There was a subject of sin, and to know he was a subject of grace. And faith was wrought in him, and that faith lived, and was a life in him, so that he took blood. He took a life in place of his own, and was accepted of God. This is the kingdom. We see it in Abraham when he was called away from all idolatry, from an idolatrous people and family and the Lord blessed him, and he went as God had commanded him from his father's house, and he had the voice of the King in his heart, in his soul "I will bless thee". He said "I will bless thee" "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward, fear not" All

subjects of this blessed kingdom have the same king and the same grace in a different measure, all of them. This kingdom then is to be for the subjection of the devil. Christ speaks to the devil. He spoke to him when he was there before the sons of God, and Joshua to resist Joshua. The accuser of the brethren was cast down from that place in a moment. "The Lord rebuke thee O satan." So, if, when you seek God, the devil goes with you, and would accuse you, if, when you would worship, the enemy is there, to blaspheme that God you would worship, then the King's power is wanted. You cannot overcome this enemy, you cannot answer this accuser. But the Lord Jesus did, and He alone can, and He will say "The Lord rebuke thee O satan, even the Lord which hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire."

He is King in providence. He ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the children of men. He changes the king's word. Of all the sights that could glad your eye, O sinner, in a fiery furnace of affliction or temptation, would be this - the sight of the Son of God coming and of all the company, sweet pleasant company that you could ever have, this is the sweetest and pleasantest, the presence, the company of the King of kings. The fire loses its heat, it cannot scorch, it cannot singe the hair, it cannot even leave its smell on you. So every providential thing that comes, every fiery trial that overtakes and all those things that are afflictive in themselves are just turned away from their natural end and result, and turned into the good of those who are afflicted. The kingdom of God, it is in you. It does not come with observation, it is in you, in your heart, in your conscience, in your affections, in your will, in your mind, in your understanding, and if we had but grace to watch and see how the Lord works in all the faculties of a redeemed and new-born soul, it would be very instructive to us. Take every faculty that you have and grace will be found in each one sooner or later, more or less. It

will be found in your will to subdue it, in your understanding to instruct it, in your affections to set them on the King of kings, and Lord of lords, in your mind to make it spiritual. O this kingdom is in the sinner. It comes, not with observation or show. It comes in the mighty moving of the Spirit of Christ, the wonderful, sweet, blessed, guiding, upholding and carrying aloft, from time to time, of the subjects of this wondrous kingdom, and, sometimes, when He will indulge a sinner, He will say - Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter, and then you enter into His presence, into the atmosphere that is health-giving and invigorating. And then the King is seen in the galleries. He is held in them. He looks through the lattice, and you see Him, and you hold Him as it were by faith and gaze at a distance, but you gaze enough upon Him, and see enough in Him, to move your affections after Him. It is wonderful to be brought into the presence of the King. You say - I do not get there. You say - I have not been invited there, at least, I have not been invited for a long time. I have thought now and again, in days past, that I got an influence, and that turned my heart to Himself, but I have not had that lately. Well may you be enabled to do this - take your life in your hand and go unbidden. O but what if He should frown? Search the scripture sinner, and see if you can find one passage that would indicate that this King ever did frown on a venturing faith, and if you find it then you may be discouraged, but if you cannot find it, follow Esther's example. She went in to her husband, an earthly king, with her life in her hand, and she was saved from the death that might appear very imminent and even inevitable. Go poor sinner, go, and you will find the golden sceptre held out to you, and you will be invited to touch it. The holding out of it to you will be the invitation to you to touch it, and when you touch it, then He will promise you everything you ask Him. "What is thy petition, what is thy request" and then you will say - that I may live Lord.

O give me my life. That I may be Thine. O bless me with this. This will be your petition, this will be your request. Lord, I am a guilty wretch, do save me. I am the worst of sinners, do deliver me from evil. I have nothing but filthy rags, give me Thy robe. I have nothing but weakness, give me Thy power. I have nothing but ignominy and shame, give me Thy beauty and Thy glory. And when you are instructed and emboldened to make such requests, what will He do? He will do after the manner of kings, Yea, He will do after His own manner and what is that? He will show infinite love and infinite kindness and give you all you have asked Him and then you will go into the banquet and you will ask Him to come and He will come, he will bring His own provision. He will bring His own furniture. He will bring His own table and though you have invited Him, He will invite you and say "Eat O friend, and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved. And this is our King. Do you feel any attraction? This is our King. Do you see His beauty? This is our King. Do you perceive His suitableness? And what will you add to Him? Nothing. What is He? Everything. All and in All. The Chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Where now would you rest? Where would you kneel and hide your soul? With whom would you be holding fellowship? Faith says - With none but Jesus. No king, but the King of kings. The kingdom of God is in power. All this is felt, better than expressed. It is in the heart, as Christ said "The kingdom of God is within you" That is, the mercy, that is, the wonder, that is, the blessedness, it is within you, and it does not come with observation, but in the sweet, blessed, secret touch, it comes into the sinner's soul. Not in word. O beware of outward show and think, as God may help you, think of this that steals quietly into the heart and draws you away from all things, and sometimes from the society of your dearest and best on earth, that you may enter into your own room, shut your door about you, and enjoy the presence of Him who has come to you. This power lifts the soul up. This power

enables the sinner to leave the world. This power crucifies the old man with the affections and lusts. This power humbles the soul. By nature we follow the prince of this world, the god of this world. By grace, if we have it, we follow the King of kings, and say Let us be Thine. May the Lord help us narrowly to look into the case and see if we have any good scriptural reason to hope that we are the subjects of this blessed King, members of this divine kingdom.