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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 1 April 1925

1 Peter 1 v 25

"But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this
is the Word which by the gospel is preached
unto you"

This blessed chapter sets before the people of God the amazing blessings of election, of regeneration, of knowledge of Christ, of tribulation; the blessings of the prophets who prophesied of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. And these things, written by divine inspiration, written for our learning and comfort, for our strengthening, are made acceptable by the Holy Ghost to all doubting, afflicted, poor, sensible, ignorant and weak people. It is a wonderful epistle, and a wonderful opening to it that we have. "To the strangers" Peter writes, scattered abroad, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied." Why should we be afraid of speaking of election since God has given it such a prominent position in His Word and also because without it who could ever hope to reach heaven, seeing that we are so depraved and so bent upon our own destruction that unless electing mercy intervened every one would inevitably destroy himself. What a wonder that God could love a sinner. What an exaltation of His glorious Person, His divine nature, that He could lay hold of, love, embrace, and kiss into heaven sinners who in their fallen nature were determined to destroy themselves. You, myself, every one in the way to heaven must say that our first step in that way arose from sovereign, electing love; that the washing of regeneration comes from the same eternal source, the kindness and love of God appearing in Jesus Christ. Incarnation, the incarnation of the Son of God arises from the same divine, eternal, uncaused source. Happy the sinner who is elected. God does not owe anything to a sinner but punishment, hell, and if He decrees to give something

different and better, even holiness and heaven, to some sinners than the praise is, and must be, His for ever and ever. And this election is manifested through sanctification of the Spirit, and the beginning of this is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, who is shed on His people abundantly through their Saviour, Jesus Christ. "Ye must be born again". O what a circumstance that is, what a day that is, when a sinner receives divine life. He does not know it; he knows there is a change - but what the change is, the nature of it, the reason of it, the end of it, he cannot imagine - because he comes into trouble, he learns that he is a sinner, he learns that he is ruined, that damnation is due to him as he is a breaker of God's holy law; he learns this through sanctification of the Spirit. We have learned it, some of us. I have learned it; I learned it many years ago; 60 years ago, and a little more, I learned that. I did not know it was the sanctification of the Spirit. O, what a God we have, what a God we have. Well may some of us sing: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life and we will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. "Our seeking God's face was all of His grace". What a wonder it is to get out of earth into heaven. How many godly people I have buried out of this chapel. In a sense I have buried a chapel full of people, and many, many of them are in heaven, and are not some of us going there, and may not some of us be very near there. What a change it will be. Sanctification of the Spirit is the beginning and the continuance and the finish and the glory, for thereby people are begotten unto a lively hope, begotten again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We were born without God and without hope in the world. We were created in Adam all right, upright, and with every reason to believe and hope that it would be well with us. Sin marred it all. Now there comes to this people elected by the Father this sanctification of the Spirit and then they are begotten by His power again unto a lively hope in God. Do not you feel it sometimes? When you are distressed and distracted, and know not what to do, where to turn, feel weak, troubled, distressed; sin is a burden and a plague, and the enemy and your own heart ever plotting your deception and ruin; do not you feel sometimes, perhaps suddenly, perhaps without a word, sweetly, suddenly it comes, a lively hope. Christ appears for a minute or two, the grace of God appears in an abundant way and measure, and again your hope is set in God. Yes,

your hope is set in God. And sometimes it goes as far as this: "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him." And this, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christ in the grave would never be a ground and reason of hope for anybody, but Christ risen again from the dead and set on high at His Father's right-hand, He is the ground and the reason of a lively hope. Yes, we hope to rise with Him, we hope to live with Him. O, it is a blessed prospect. How it separates you from evil when you feel its power, does it not? How it separates you from yourselves, does it not? How it makes you want to live before and with the Lord and walk with Him.

This lively hope is not fixed on earth. There is nothing on earth to do it good, nothing on earth to bear it up, nothing on earth to satisfy it - not house, nor gold, nor land. There is nothing on earth big enough for a lively hope or good enough for a lively hope. Its satisfaction is in an inheritance undefiled. This is it. Incorruptible, therefore undying; undefiled, therefore undying; for where there is no corruption there can be no death. O what an amazing mercy to have this blessed hope. I would not be without it - if the Lord would grant me to feel it - I would not be without it for all the world, a lively hope of one day entering into the blissful and bliss giving presence of God; the Trinity, to know the Trinity, to see the Trinity, to rejoice in the Trinity, to walk with the Trinity. This is the hope, this is the inheritance that we are looking forward to.

But then we are weak. O how weak I am. Sin makes us all weak, ever ready to slip and turn aside. How then can we hold on? "Kept by the power of God". That is what the Spirit says. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready" - already in God's provision; ready in the time appointed - "to be revealed in the last time". And this affects the sinner in whom it is. You could not feel it and not be affected by it in this way. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice", yes rejoice, not in this life, not in the things you possess. Pleasing though they are, and lawful though it is for you to enjoy them, still there is something beyond and better and bigger and more lasting. "Wherein" - in this inheritance in Him who has given it; in Him who is the very soul and substance and life and glory

of it - ye greatly rejoice." Not without interruption, not without a counter balance, not without something to make you know that this is not your rest. "Though now for a season if need be", and God is the judge of that, not you, not myself. "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth". Not only the faith is precious, but the trial of it is precious. The trouble God puts you into is a precious trouble. The mortification you feel is a precious mortification; the humbling dispensations you have, precious indeed. Not for the present are they joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. If we were spiritually sane oftener, we should oftener realise the blessedness of being in affliction. Tis good for me, said one, that I have been afflicted. The man who goes with his head always up and his thoughts always exalted and has no reproof, no tribulation, no depressing sense of sin, is not to be envied. Cheer up ye travelling souls, who can properly value good tidings from a far country but the sinner who, in this present world, and in his present condition, has much to cast him down? Zion is to lift up her voice, to lift it up with strength and not fear, and each shall say to the other: "Thy God reigneth". Why should we not fear to say that? Because our foundation is in Christ. The reason and cause of this is what God is in Himself. And so throughout this chapter, upon the various parts of which, though so attractive, I must not dwell. And the Apostle at the end of it speaks to this people as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever". That is the new birth, begotten again by the Word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. "All flesh is as grass" This tells us what we are naturally, it tells us that our foundation is in the dust, that we must needs die and be as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. This is what is before you, before me, we must die. This pulpit, these pews, will one day miss us; we shall be no more. Our friends will miss us and they will follow us. "All flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away". That is the best naturally of us all, the best of us, that which is most pleasing among men, even that that is praised among men, that is beautiful in character, in life, even that shall be as a

fading flower. Well, and what afterwards? Man dieth, man wasteth away, he giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Where is his wealth, where his poverty, where his pleasures, where his pains, where are they? All gone, all passed. Well, my brethren, it is a poor thing if there is nothing beyond that for us. A gloomy outlook if there is nothing better for us. Is there nothing better? O yes. Yes, says the Spirit, "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever", that word on which you have rested, that word that has comforted you, that word that has directed your heart, your faith, your hope, your love to the Lord of life and glory; that word, though you die, that word endureth for ever. And this is ^{explained} explicated, enlarged thus: "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." So now we come to congregations and churches and the ministry, and the minister is to say something about what is incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away. The Apostle Paul says in one place, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord". Again, he says, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." And again he says: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." That is what you have got before you, you who have had, and still have, the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth in your own hearts.

Let us look briefly, as enabled, at this blessed gospel; blessed gospel. I think I have loved it a good many years, but never as much as nowadays. I never was such a sinner as now, and I never, therefore, as I trust, had such value for Christ as now. The gospel; good news. The eternal God revealing Himself in the Person of Christ. The gospel; the imputation of sin to the Lord Jesus and the carrying away of sin by Him into the land of forgetfulness. The gospel; the vicarious death of Christ and His burial and His resurrection. The gospel; His ascension into heaven, and there, at the right-hand of the Father sitting and interceding. "Ever living to intercede for all who come unto God by Him." The gospel; providing strength for the weak, food for the hungry, comfort for the miserable and power for those who have no strength at all. The gospel; full of promises telling poor people that God wont leave them nor forsake them; that He is faithful, that what He has told them He will perform in them and for them. The gospel; that says "This God is our God for ever and

ever. He will be our Guide even unto death." This is a proclamation, a proclamation of liberty to the captives, of blood that cleanses the blackest soul and washes out every stain. The blood of Christ that brings near, all to whom it is made known, unto God. There is a new and living way that affords a plea, that gives success to that plea, the gospel of Christ's precious, precious blood. That makes known to poor sinners how propitious God is in His beloved Son; how tender to all sinners, how acceptable they are to Him when they come, how pleasing they are, how honouring to Him their faith is. This blessed gospel, I wish I knew how to preach it and you to hear it better. O that we had faith in this gospel. We have not half the faith, and perhaps it is because we are not half ruined in self, not half bad enough in our own feelings, not half hungry enough, but where there is real feeling this gospel will be made precious by the Holy Ghost.

Let me bring this before you because it endures for ever, namely the incarnation of the Son of God. We are shut out from God's presence by our sins, we are kept from His presence by the law. Then what can bring us near? "I" says the dear, incarnate Saviour, "I am the Way", "I am the door". Says Paul, preaching Him: "Through whom we have access by one Spirit unto the Father". Brethren, bind this to the altar, this blessed truth, the incarnation of God's only begotten Son. Sweet is it to sing as sometimes you do - "I love the incarnate mystery, and there I fix my trust". A fundamental, rudimentary, and it becomes an experience, the beginning and the ending. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending", the expression, the manifestation, of the love and the wisdom and the power of God. O what a truth it is. When you pray really it is in respect of this and because of this. When you get the Father's ear, it is because He is in the Son. When He looks propitiously and kindly on you, it is in His dear Son. When He speaks mercifully to you, it is in His dear Son, by whom He speaks in these last days. When He tells you He will bring you through, it is for Christ's sake. The incarnation is fundamental. My brethren, you will get good success with God if you come to Him in the incarnate Word. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." O sweet revelation, divine - delighted sometimes, we have heard its contents - for all the Father could give He gave then. All He could do in purpose and act He did then.

All He could say, He said then. And when He deals with people it is just opening out what He did and what He gave and what He will say, what He did say, in sending His dearly beloved Son. Experience is the opening out and fulfilling of a divine purpose toward a sinner, an elect person. Experience does not make the gospel; the gospel makes experience. Experience adds nothing to Christ; it is the bringing in of Christ, the manifestation of Him. Experience - O may you never be without it. Experience - O may you never make a bed of it, never make a rock of it. The rock, the bed, is Christ. Experience is the opening out and the application of Him by the Holy Ghost. Now I say, in the incarnate Son we see how consistent with salvation is the holy, holy, just law of God; that divine justice and divine mercy harmonise; they become one and walk as one and speak as one and deal as one, and what saint could ever wish salvation at the expense of divine justice. But when faith sees that divine justice is satisfied amply, and pleased fully with the salvation of a sinner through the incarnation and work of the Son of God, then O how acceptable to the soul is that salvation. See what a ground you have poor sinner. May the proclamation of liberty be in your heart. God sent His Son to proclaim liberty to the captives; liberty from the law and its curse; liberty from all the hard service of Egypt; liberty eventually from all the turmoil in your own soul, and liberty from the presence of that foul spirit, the devil, and all his vile temptations. And this endures. You may get a providential deliverance and it last for a day, a month, a year, or more, but it comes to an end. You may get a debt paid and you may contract another debt. But when your debts are paid by the Lord Jesus, when His blessed death is revealed to you as covering all, removing all, when it is signed and sealed on your conscience by the Holy Ghost, then those debts, all of them, are for ever done away. They will never be brought out and opened, and the page on which your name is written and your debts, opened and pointed out to you. Never; never be opened again. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." That will do, that will do for ever. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins". Forgiveness here, glory hereafter. "Double for all her sins", and the Word of the Lord that tells you this, that brings this, that

seals this on your heart, endureth. Yea, moreover, through the incarnation of the Son of God every trouble, all sickness and afflictions are sanctified and shall bear fruit in the comfort of the soul, and to His glory. Think of it. Now you have got a trouble and you say I deserve it, and nobody will contradict you in that understanding that you say I deserve it and hell at the end; true. And that is quite true; all our afflictions are sin born, though they may be sent in love. All our afflictions we procure to ourselves. I do know this for myself; I confess it to God often. Ah you may pity yourself in a bad spirit, in a rebellious mood, but when you come to your senses by the Holy Spirit's teaching, then you will say I have procured it to myself, Lord; I deserve it. Yea, and you may sit down to your meal and say honestly, Lord I do not deserve a crumb. Yea, when you are breathing without pain you may say, Lord, I do not deserve so to breathe. And it is a good thing, O a very good thing, for it humbles you and honours Him. And then what a wonder to see this, that God turns a trouble that you have brought on yourself into a sign of His love to you and a token of your sonship. As many, He says, as I love, I rebuke. I chasten every son. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Is it not wonderful that this blessed God, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of the Father comes and turns into that good thing - a sign of our sonship, a token of His love to us - the very troubles that we have brought on ourselves. Who could do this but incarnate Deity? Who could do it? An absolute God could not do it, for sin to pardon is not, I was going to say, within the capacity of absolute Deity. He could not save that way, but saves by the incarnation of His beloved Son and so He turns all evil into good to His saints, and He says, I will come and save you. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" And when the enemies come and treat us evilly, yea, when an army comes against us, then what? When we are taken into captivity, what shall come to pass? Their captors refused to let them go. What then? O, their Redeemer is strong, and He will throughly plead their cause. So you see what we owe to the incarnation of the Son of God. "The Word was made flesh" and He endures for ever. His love endures for ever, His condescension in this endures for ever. Take courage then, lift your heads up O poor, tried believers. "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever."

Now just a few minutes more I will speak of this for our

encouragement, namely that the Word of God, as an encouraging word of promise, endures for ever. Now He has promised this: "They that seek shall find". "Then shall ye find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" says the Lord. What a wonder. Now of all the wonderful things on earth this is among them, one of the greatest of them, that earth-bound and hell-bound sinners are taught to seek God. We shall be seekers as long as we live if we have divine grace. Yes, we shall be seekers because we need daily mercy, bread for our souls, guidance for our steps, deliverances out of our troubles, and sweet favours and love visits from God. If we were more hungry we should be far better. More zealous we should be in seeking the Lord. But what a wonder that there is a word like this: "They that seek shall find, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"; and you will come to the gospel for this. "This is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Why sinner, seeker, I can preach a good and free and full gospel; no tax, no toll, no condition. Says the good and gracious God, Jesus Christ, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". He says it. "This is the will of Him that sent Me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him should have everlasting life, and I will raise Him up at the last day." He never lets poor people die of hunger; He may allow them to be pinched, even till their bones stick out, but He will never let them die of hunger. Plenty of bread in your heavenly Father's house there is O seeking child, plenty of bread. And when a man is brought to this that it is cry or die, have bread or perish, if that be his case then he will find his way - under the secret teachings and motions of the Spirit - he will find his way to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and then he will get some bread. And what bread? What is the bread? "I am the Bread of Life", Jesus Christ, who said "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you"; and this is the bread. "I am come down from heaven" I give My flesh; this is the bread that I will give. Dear hungry soul, think of it. That is what you have got to eat, that is what the Lord has provided for you; the very thing that eternal wisdom and love and power were concerned in, in eternity. And the very soul that you possess, yea your body, your very person, seen, loved, laid hold of in the counsel of peace in eternity, that you should be hungry for that bread, and that bread should be given you so that the two should meet. As you sit down to your table and there is your

food, so when you come to the gospel a hungry soul, there is the bread. And what bread, I say again? O what bread? Jesus Christ, that is the bread. He comes in the Word and the soul receives the Word and receives Christ. He comes in a gracious visit and the soul receives Him. The soul has some sense of His approach. The voice of my beloved, behold He cometh leaping o'er the mountains, skipping o'er the hills, and the soul receives Him. Faith opens her arms and receives Him, and that is eating His flesh, drinking His blood. His atonement speaks peace, His Person nourishes you. That is the Bread of Life, and it endureth. Never shall a sinner perish who has received this Bread. What encouragement is this for us, as some of us believe that we have received Him into our hearts. Yea, our consciences, and our understandings, and our wills and our minds; these have cordially received Him. You follow Him who have so received Him. The very objections of your nature have been trampled under foot of grace, the pride of your heart has been stamped and ground to powder at times, and you have received this dear Saviour, the Bread of eternal life. "I am that Bread." "I am that Bread". And what says the Lord Jesus? He may meet your fears; you may say sometimes I am afraid my religion will die out. What says the Saviour? "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life." He shall never die, never perish. His troubles will die, his afflictions will cease, his body will rot in the grave, but his happy soul will be in glory, and on the resurrection morn then his body also, freed from corruption and mortality, shall be with the Lord and like Him. This is the Word, this is the gospel, that is preached unto you. Can you receive it? Can you believe it? Yea, does it not sometimes make its way into your heart? And every time you receive a little of it, it makes you the more earnest to receive more, for it is one of the sweet effects of grace and of Christ coming in, that while He satisfies every desire, the satisfaction seems to be still more hungry. You want Him the more you have of Him. And this is the Word of the Lord that endures for ever. Look at your body, you say it is dying; at your troubles, they must pass away; at the tribulation, it must end. Yet there is something in you, something spoken to you, something you hope for that cannot pass away, that endureth for ever. The contrast is striking and the result is beautiful, beautiful. What am I to live for ever and does my soul look up and may I hope to be found in the Lord, not having mine own righteousness which is of the

law, but that which is through the faith of God, the righteousness which is of God by faith? That is it, yes that is it. Our hope is not fixed on earth - If in this life only we have hope we are of all men most miserable - but our hope is in heaven, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come. Well now, dear friends, as the Lord may help you, turn away from your miserable selves. As He helps you, look to this Saviour of sinners, this Friend of sinners and consider what He says. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". May the Lord help us to do this and grant that we may see and hear and feel this Word of the Lord which is the gospel preached unto us.

AMEN.