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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on 21 February 1912

1 Peter 1 v 3-5

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant
mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively
hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ
from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible,
and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in
heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God
through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the
last time"

These words are addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, to the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father who eternally predestinated them to obtain salvation and to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. The elect freely loved, and by that free love distinguished from the reprobate; the elect given to Christ before the foundation of the world, to whom grace was given in Christ that they, in time, should be partakers of it to whom eternal life was given; the elect given to Christ - "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me". These favoured people, blessed people in the eye, in the heart, in the hand of God, loved in eternity. All necessary provision for the regeneration, sanctification, justification, right, and title for heaven, all given to them in the Person of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ, and this Apostle, by the Holy Ghost, exhorts the Lord's people to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure". If you have diligence in prayer, and supplication to know whose you are, and to know Christ for yourselves, you will get an answer in God's time. Diligence in this matter is seeking the face of God, confessing sin, ploughing deep, and digging up your fallow ground, and sowing to yourselves in righteousness. Diligence in this matter, I say, is waiting on the Lord, and a wonderful mercy it is to be brought to it. O, there is room in our doubts for God's assurances; room in our weakness for His power; room in our states

for His goodness, His lovingkindness. Then to these people the Apostle says : "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through" - by means of - "sanctification of the Spirit"; manifested to be His, and brought to be strangers; strangers, dispersed, scattered abroad. "Through sanctification of the Spirit" whose work it is, whose especial work it is to regenerate the election of grace given to Christ by the Father, and redeemed by Christ. It is His work to call them, to gather them, and to sanctify them through the blood of the everlasting covenant. "Through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience", the obedience of faith by which the sinner comes with his prejudice broken up; his prejudice against Christ, and against God's way of saving sinners; whose prejudices are so broken up that now, instead of rejecting, and spurning, and hating, and despising Christ, the broken down people go to Him and pray Him to take them, receive them. "Receive us graciously" is their prayer according to the Spirit. The obedience of faith brings them to Christ's righteousness. They receive it, they receive the atonement; they no longer have that powerful, and reigning objection to it, and rejecting, and turning away from, and spurning Jesus Christ. All that has gone, and they feel that their highest mercy will be to be graciously received, dealt with, and saved.

"Unto obedience", this obedience, and all other obedience that follows, such as walking in His gracious ways, in His holy ordinances, which He has left.

"And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" by which they are made nigh. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ". Ah you will never forget it really if once you get that experience of being made nigh to Him from whom you have felt very far off, at an infinite distance, through your sins.

Then he says "Grace unto you" - more grace than you have got - "Grace unto you and peace - the peace of God - be multiplied" This is the Apostolic salutation. Now the text, so to speak, begins the Epistle proper: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Dear friends, have you no blessing for God? The saints have blessings for Him. On the head of Christ are many crowns. We, some of

us, have a crown to put on His head. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". For us to bless God is to praise Him. When He blesses sinners He does them good. When we bless God we only praise Him; we add nothing to Him. His blessing of us adds to us. Our praising Him is nothing more than speaking well of Him, blessing His holy Name, and this is well-pleasing to Him.

Dost mind the place, the spot of land
Where Jesus did thee meet?

Then bless God for it. "Praise is comely for the upright". The Psalmist in the Psalm we were now reading indulges in this. He brings himself, as it were, in the spirit of gratitude and says: "All that is within me", all the powers redeemed, quickened, sanctified, moved by the Lord the Spirit, "All that is within me bless His holy Name". Sweet work this; O, sweet work this. Nor have we always to wait for it till we get out of some affliction. There are moments when afflicted sinners say: "Bless the Lord". I know it; you, some of you, know it also. Think of it; what, with affliction on your loins, bless the Lord? Yes. But how can you? When His blessing is in your soul. His blessing in the sinner's soul does not depend upon his circumstances, but upon the Lord's coming. If we blessed God as much as His mercies to us call for, when should we cease blessing Him? Never. O, the goodness of God to us, does not it strike a cheerful note in your heart sometimes, sinner? Does not it make you look up, lift up your head and believe that your salvation is now nearer than when you believed? Does not it take your eye off your gloomy circumstances and say, There is that in my God, and that from Him in my soul, that is infinitely better than the best in this changing time scene, this poor world. Well, may the Lord help us to do what we should do; Bless His holy Name. Let not His mercies lie always in forgetfulness and without praises die. When we complain, may we think of what we are doing. When we praise may we be enabled to believe that we are doing what is acceptable to God. Think on His mercies dear friends, on His goodness in calling by grace, on His kindness in giving intimations of His love, of His great goodness when He pardoned your sins. Think of the visits of His love, the times He has kindly spoken to you, and revived you; the times when He has turned your captivity, the times He has let you see Christ, and

when Jesus Christ Himself has come to you, and when you think of these things, then may the Lord help you to join with the Psalmist and say: "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy Name", and with the Apostle Peter here: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". He is worthy of it, He is worthy of it, and of infinitely more than we can give Him.

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were a present far too small
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all

May we give all in the spirit of gratitude and faith.

And He speaks of the Father in relation to Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" - and my friends, may we bless God for this, that this relationship of Christ as a Son to His Father, He does not stand in alone. O, He said, ere He ascended into heaven, when risen and appearing to His Own dear ones; He said in a message sent to His disciples, Go, tell My disciples I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God. What a mercy to have this relationship made over to us by the Holy Ghost. Why sinner, this will not die when you die. You will enter upon the fullness of it when time with you shall be no more. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". O, why? God has put all goodness there. All fullness that shall be wanted by His people, all holiness, all righteousness, all strength, all life, all pardons, He has put all there. In Him it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. And yet we are surprised at times, through our ignorance and folly, that we have not a stock of more in ourselves. No, that is not the Lord's way. He trusted one man alone once and trusted him with all human nature, and that one man spoiled all, spent all up, ruined all his future race, and He will never trust a mere man again. No, but He trusts the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and He has put all in Him that His church shall need; put it all there that they, being emptied in themselves, shall go, in the light and teaching of the Spirit, to Him for all the supplies that they need. "Which" - that is God the Father - "according to His abundant" - or much - "mercy" (in the Ephesians it is called rich mercy) "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". Dearly beloved friends, a new born sinner is advanced to a very high honour and the new birth in this verse is connected with the resurrection of Christ in a mysterious, and glorious manner, and the new birth indeed is the fruit of the resurrection of Christ. This gives at once a view, as God may open it, a view of the cause of the new birth, and of the effect of the new birth, of the new state and relationship into which all the subjects of the new birth are brought, and it glorifies exceedingly the resurrection of Jesus Christ, making it the very source of that new life and state into which the saints are brought one by one by the Eternal Spirit. It is much goodness, much mercy, rich mercy. Paul says to the Ephesians: "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" and he would have them remember that they had been the same. "But" he says "God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". The resurrection of Christ we would therefore, as helped, just try to set before you in this wondrous light, that it is the very source of this new life which is communicated to the saints in regeneration. Not Sinai's law, O no, that troubles them later, but the life of Christ is the cause of regeneration, and it is Christ's life as He is raised from the dead. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father and His saints are quickened together with Him. There is a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Shall a nation be born at once?" There was a nation born in a day, that morning when the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, wherein lay Jesus Christ, and that glorious conqueror of death came forth. And there was in that resurrection, that marvellous, that sufficient attestation to the sufficiency of His atoning work. On that morning when Christ came forth from the grave there came with Him out of their graves, so to speak, a whole nation. One says, Kent

One in the tomb, one when He rose
One when he triumphed o'er His foes
One when in heaven He took His seat
And seraphs sang all hell's defeat

and the Holy Ghost as distinctly sets forth that the new birth which every elected, redeemed child of God partakes of, flows from this resurrection of Christ, that is to say, if Christ had not risen from His grave, no wretched creature would ever have risen from his death in trespasses and sins to live a new life unto God; never. Christ in the grave, we all should have been there eternally. Christ left there, we all should have been left there eternally. Now if the Holy Ghost should open this to us, as I apprehend it, it would exceedingly glorify the resurrection of Christ, and show to us the nature of that life which some of us must believe God, many years ago, imparted to us, and dear friends look at what is said concerning Christ's life after His resurrection. The Apostle, speaking of His death, says, "He died unto sin once". O, when He was on the cross, there He had a burdened heart, there He was what His Father had made Him under the law - sin. O, for faith just to notice it. If you are led into it, you will be led into the mystery of God's love, and justice, and wisdom, in making His sinless Son, sin. You will be led into the mystery of God calling upon His sword to awake against His Own Son, and into the mystery of the darkness that covered His Own Son, into the mystery of that desertion of His Own Son by His Father, and to be led into that is to be led into some sense and sight of the infinite evil of sin. How did Christ die? "He died unto sin once". O, that impenetrable cloud, impenetrable over so many hours, that hung over Christ; that dreadful sword that was called upon to awake against Him, and that fearful curse in the law that, like liquid fire, was poured into His bones. Now that was the cause of His death and He died unto sin, and in so dying He put away sin for He said on the cross: "It is finished", bowed His glorious head, and gave up the ghost. And on the morning of His resurrection there was that marvellous attestation of this sufficient, glorious work of His. He is said to have been raised by the glory of the Father, and you will find it is also said, God raised Him from the dead. God raised Him from the dead. "Him hath God exalted" because God, so to speak, by His sword brought death upon Him, and now, said His Father, the death that My sword has inflicted is sufficient; it pleases Me. Come forth, O mighty conqueror of death, and He came out of His grave. May the Lord ever keep me from darkening counsel by words without knowledge when I speak on so mysterious, and so wonderful a subject, only just now it is a life to my own spirit that this blessed One, who was buried, was raised by the

glory of His Father, and therefore - and this shows the intimate union that subsists between the sinner born again, and Jesus Christ - it is by that resurrection that the saints are begotten again to a lively hope, a holy life, because now, as Paul says, "In that He liveth He liveth unto God". He groaned, He wept, He bled, He smarted, had a broken heart, while He was here groaning. He poured out His soul unto death when He was made sin, and because He was made sin. When all that was put away, says Paul: "He liveth unto God". He has no sin. He obeyed God before in obeying the law; now He lives unto Him and before Him and is at His right hand having the fullness of life; and as one expressed it in the Hebrews He liveth "after the power of an endless life". And that does not respect His eternal Person as He is a Person in the Godhead, as He is God. It respects that life which He has for His people, endless, and powerful. "I give unto My sheep eternal life". And powerful; it overcomes their corruption. Yes, and when you have it, you have a powerful life, you have a powerful life, and it will be rising, or struggling to rise, as long as you are in this tabernacle groaning, to rise to its own source and centre - God Himself. Paul says to the Ephesians: You hath God quickened and raised with His Son to sit in heavenly places in Him. And this seems to me to set the new birth on a most exalted level. It raises it to a wonderful pitch of glory to see that it comes from the Lord Jesus who was dead and who was raised again by the glory of the Father. Now the Apostle says, you are born again, you are quickened, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ are begotten to a lively hope. What is the state of unregenerate people? Hopeless - as Paul says - "Without God and without hope in the world". They do not feel hopeless. O no. Why do not they feel hopeless? Because they do not know they are without God. They live their own life, which is death. But when a sinner is born again, he, having two lives in him, and feeling only the worst, the evil life, the life of sin, and being seized, more or less distinctly, by the law, he dies, and he feels hopeless. "The commandment came and I died", and then all hope died. O yes, hope is as much dead on all legal, natural grounds, in a new born soul, as every hope died in the breasts of those men who thought that - when over many days neither sun nor stars appeared - all hope of being saved was taken away. You will never get hope out of the law, and you will never find hope spring up in your law-smitten conscience. You could as much expect purest life to come out of a

grave as you must expect a living hope to grow in your condemned conscience, or to come to you by a condemning law. But there is a way, a blessed way, in which God does beget a sinner to a lively hope; a new way He has of doing it, and that is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Regeneration comes that way, and hope comes that way. Yes, all lively hope, warm, reviving hope, in a sinner's soul - and sometimes that hope is high enough to hold him up, as it were, to embrace, and console him, and say this to him by the Holy Ghost, Hope in God; better days are coming, an eternal day is coming.

Let us look a little at this lively hope, first of all in its begetting. God begets it, He begets it in sinners, in hopeless breasts, in consciences smitten by a condemning law, and by their own powerful voice testifying against a sinner. He begets it when He shows this, that Christ died for the ungodly. O, have not you admired sometimes, greatly admired the way the Lord states the gospel? I have admired that way at times myself. He said: "Christ died for the ungodly". Why, that is just what a poor thing is feeling himself to be - ungodly. Within ungodly, tongue ungodly, motives ungodly, acts ungodly. He is an ungodly man who has lived without God. An ungodly man who has done his things, even if they are moral, and have been done most morally, he is ungodly because in doing them he had no reference to God. Now Christ died for the ungodly. A man ungodly is a man covered with sin, and, says a poor creature born again, that is just the man I am; and he is likely to be buried in sin, and one says, that is just what I am fearing, to be buried in my own sins. And then the Holy Spirit opens this great truth: "Christ died for the ungodly". Delivered He was for our offences, and raised again for our justification, and the sight of Christ raised and in heaven interceding; a Priest able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, begets a lively hope. Probably some of you will never forget the first buddings of hope in your souls, and did they not come from some sight of a blessed risen, precious Christ, One able to save the soul to the uttermost as it comes to God; a lively hope that lives in your breast, that does not lie dormant. A lively hope that bids you not despair, that, strengthened by the Spirit, although you are not conscious of that Spirit working in you, says in you - Call upon God; venture your soul on Christ. Look though stung to death; look sinner, look sinner to the atonement. Look to the

Priesthood of Christ, look to Christ in His intercession. The buddings of hope, the first motions and springings up in the heart of hope, of lively hope, are very wonderful. Legal despair, and self-despair, and a tempting devil have ground the soul to powder. Ah, to some it has seemed life was not worth holding, and who can say how some have been driven when they have been under the powerful operations of the law, and self-despair. O, but the blessed Spirit keeps the sinner, stirs prayer up, moves, teaches, enables him to pray, and then, sooner or later, shelter is given. Now that first work is a work that is carried on - we call it the first, but it is only one work from the beginning to the end really - that is carried on and the hope grows stronger, and when you are quite sure of being right with God then you are saved by hope. Paul says: "We are saved by hope". Hope that hangs on God, a lively hope. But dear friends, hope, as a grace, has an Object. The grace of hope in a soul has an Object, and it is to that Object the grace of hope goes. It is from that Object the grace of hope derives its being, and it is from that Object that the grace of hope derives all its growth and strength and liveliness in the soul. There is an Object, O blessed Object, O lovely Object, and that Object was before some who in the prophecy of Jeremiah tell us a little of themselves, when they are addressing the Lord. This is their language: "O, the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" Who was the Object of hope, the hope of Israel? Why, God. What is His Name in the Romans? "The God of hope". "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost". That is the Lord, that is the Lord, the Object of hope. And in what particulars is He sometimes seen to be the Object of hope? First, as having put away sin, and, as the sinner hopes, his sin. What a good point it is to be brought to, what a blessed point, when you can say of Christ: "Who loved me and gave Himself for me". When you can say: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". New born sinner, give diligence to make this sure. When the enemy would put you aside from seeking, when a sense of sin would stop you from it, when all those things in your nature would hinder you, give diligence, according to Peter's exhortation - give diligence that this may be made out to you

- that the Son of God loved you, and gave Himself for you. He is the Object of hope in that then, in His resurrection. To keep this before you as Peter sets it out, His resurrection, Christ risen, what an Object. The two disciples - and all of them - but two in particular I am just to mention; what a death was on their hope. They thought He was gone. Hope was gone because He was buried. But when they knew that He was risen, then arose their hope. Yes, and when you see Him risen, though your hope may have been buried in some trouble, out of sight to you in some temptation, when you see Him again you will see Him to be better, and greater than all your troubles, more powerful than all your sins, and your hope will rise as you see Him risen from the dead. And when you see His Priesthood, just the same effect - "Able to save to the uttermost" - O you will go to Him - "all that come unto God by Him". You will make a venture in your soul. There will be that going to Him. You will

Venture on Him, venture solely
Let no other trust intrude

as a promising Saviour, as "God who cannot lie", as He who has said: "I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice"; as that holy One who said: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". As you see Him thus, hope will be again lively in your spirit. When you see Him omnipotent it will be just the same.

How can I sink with such a prop
That holds the world and all things up

And when you see Him full, full of goodness, and riches; gold, silver, cattle on a thousand hills, and all grace in His hand and heart, how can you give way to despair? When you see His wisdom, your perplexities will begin to fall down, as it were, and you will say

Wisdom and mercy guide my way
Shall I resist them both
A poor blind creature of a day
And crushed before the moth

This lively hope in God in Christ; by His resurrection God has wrought this in us. He has wrought this mighty wonder in our souls. It wont make you proud to think what a great, great, great work, God has wrought in you in working that new birth. It is called a new creation; it is called a "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"; "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him". Beloved friends who are born again, you are destined to live with God, and because that divine nature was given you in election, and also because no sin, no sinner as such, can stand in His presence, therefore He gives a holy nature, and a complete righteousness to all His saints, that they should "be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"; and therefore begotten to this lively hope in respect of their inheritance, they are after that inheritance. Who "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead", and they are risen from the dead because He was raised from the dead. They are brought out of their graves because His Father brought Him from His grave. They live after the power of an endless life because they live the life He lives as their Head and Redeemer, and what it is "unto God" is more than this time state. O it is not passing away with our lives. All earthly inheritances are fading, they are corruptible; they have the seed of death, that is corruption, in them, and they are fading away, and they are defiled by sin. This inheritance, O believer, is incorruptible, undefiled, and it fadeth not away.

Perfect holiness of spirit
Saints above, full of love,
With the Lamb inherit

Now that begins here in the giving of new life. They inherit righteousness, it is made theirs. They inherit the greatest wealth a creature can inherit; they inherit eternal life. They are children of God and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus; and they are to inherit heaven where is the river of pleasures at God's right hand, ever full, deep river, purest river, glorious river. They are to inherit, so to speak, God Himself. When Levi, the tribe of Levi, was set apart and consecrated unto the office of the priesthood, the Lord said he should have no part like the

others in the land, no inheritance except cities to dwell in and their suburbs for the cattle, out of the inheritance of the children of Israel. (Joshua 21 v 2-3). That was all he was to have. What then? O, He said - I can never tell you how I have felt about that and admired it in my own spirit - He said "I am thy portion". That was the best after all, that was the best, to live on the Altar which he served, and that is the inheritance. You will live on the Altar, you will live on Christ, and belonging to Him, you will receive Him, of His goodness, of His fullness, from time to time. That is the life His saints live, and they are begotten to it. God, their God. O He is their portion. The Lord is the portion of His people, and His people are the Lord's portion. That is their inheritance. It may well be called incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Therefore it is spoken of thus: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself", to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Now a hope of this - is not it wonderful that you should have it? - O sinner, a hope of this, well might one say

A hope so much divine
May trials well endure

Indeed we may say it. We must have trials, what a mercy if we have a hope, good hope through grace. Good hope through grace there is connected with everlasting consolation. Not unceasing in the sweet feeling of it, but everlasting in the nature of it, everlasting in the fullness of it, everlasting in the source of it. That is what it is, everlasting consolation. And where does this hope fix. O says Paul, We have hope as an anchor of the soul and the proper ground for an anchor is ground where the ship is to be moored and fixed. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus....." He entered with His Own blood and hope goes there, casts her flukes, so to speak, there, and holds the soul there. "To an inheritance incorruptible" - no sin, no taint of sin there - "undefiled" - never, never to be touched by anything that is unclean - "and that fadeth not away". O but we may lose it. Says

the Arminian you may lose it. No, says God, you may not, you cannot, but says the sinner, I am too feeble, too foolish to hold on. That is not what the Lord has said shall be. He says, this is reserved for you, this is kept for you. It is hid in God, hid there. No, they have no rust, no moth there. Is thy treasure in heaven, O sinner born again? No thief there enters, no rust, no moth. Kept for you, and not that only, but you are kept for it. "Which is reserved in heaven for you who are kept" -held, preserved - "by the power of God through faith" - in its motions in the soul going out to Him, and holding the soul, keeping it secure enough, but not making it self-secure. "Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" Nothing to be added to it. No security to be added to that which already it has, but ready to be revealed in that time that God has Himself fixed. First in the event; he is to inherit it. He has fixed the bounds of our habitation. And secondly the great morning of the resurrection when all His saints shall rise from their graves, and there shall be a union again of soul and body in each case,so, as the Apostle says,shall we ever be with the Lord. I must now leave off. May the Lord continue it and increase it and show us particularly the glory of the regeneration because of its connection with, and being the fruit of, the resurrection of Christ.

AMEN.