

25/8/10

1369 b
La 1812

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 5 February 1922

1 Peter 1 verses 6 and 7

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season,
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, though
it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise
and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"

The text tells us of an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. The Scripture in other places speaks of a kingdom that passes away; this world and the fashion of it must perish. God knows how many of us, with our hearts, prefer this spiritual, this incorruptible inheritance, and how many wish for nothing better than this world. It is a solemn thing to be in the world, but it is a terrible thing to be of it. To be in it is to be in trouble. To be of it is to be under the curse, and to be an enemy of God. To be in it is to be hated by all, more or less, with whom you may come into intimate contact. To be of it, is to be lying in wickedness. O sinner, you who are of the world, the Holy Ghost make you think and feel this truth, that, being of the world, being under the solemn sentence of death that hangs over the world, you, at the present moment, have not the shadow of a reason to believe that when you die you will enter into a better state. There is every reason in the Scripture to conclude that, dying in the world, and of the world, and like the world, and choosing the world for your companions, you will be where the wicked are, for God casteth the wicked into hell with all nations that forget Him. Ah, you may be looking for the world, but the world will always elude you in your pursuit of it. You will never get it really, that is the happiness you seek. You may be in it, thinking this is good, and that, but the world will never meet your wishes really. But there is a kingdom, an inheritance, here of which the Spirit by Peter speaks. Happy are the people, thrice happy to whom these words are spoken. "Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,

Asia, and Bithynia". Strangers, these thus addressed; strangers in two senses. First, they were strangers in race from all other nations; they were Jews of the dispersion and they were scattered in the judgment of God; the twelve tribes to whom James writes his epistle, scattered abroad, and it is so to this day. And one standing evidence of the truth of the Scripture is that that people whom God chose for His inheritance, and whom He scattered and dispersed for their sins, stands still, and shall stand, alone; not reckoned among the nations. Well, in this sense, we have no interest in this word "strangers". We are among those amongst whom the Jews were scattered; we are Gentiles. But, in the second sense, the word "strangers" is applicable to some of us, as we believe. Strangers and pilgrims in the earth, seeking a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Strangers to the world in which once we were at home. Strangers to its ways, in which we once walked. Strangers to its spirit, which once fully possessed us. Now, through divine grace, we are strangers, and can say with the Psalmist - we can say individually, here and there - "Hide not Thy commandments from me for I am a stranger in the earth". Lord, do teach me; "Teach me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." Teach me to know Him of whom the world said He is not worthy to live; give us a robber; take Christ and crucify Him. Teach me to walk in the way of faith, in the way of holiness, in the way of truth, in the way of obedience. And to strangers in this important and blessed sense the Apostle was inspired by the Holy Ghost to write: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Happy people embraced in this word "elect". O what a word it is. Dearly beloved friends, there is nothing between us and hell but what is contained in this word "elect". All the free-will doctrines in the world will never save a soul. All the boasted universalism that you may hear, will never stop a sinner. All the talk about the love of God and the Father-hood of God will never bring a sinner to his senses. I say it again, and I entreat you to listen to it, there is nothing between us and hell, that will keep us out of hell, but what is contained in this important word "elect". Whether we like it or not, here it is. You may dash yourself against it in anger; all you do, if you do so, is to hurt yourself. One might take a delicate piece of glass, beautiful in its form, and dash it against a rock. What would the effect be? So you poor vessels may dash yourselves against the rock of divine truth,

and the only effect would be that you would be broken to shivers. God has some people; He has a people. They are the people whom He hath chosen for Himself. "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father". All things that you might conceive as possible events, and that may become events, must be within this word "knowledge", God's knowledge. Whom He did foreknow to be His own, them He also called. We sing, and sing truly, sometimes, "Free election's known by calling". This won't give you liberty to sin and it won't excuse you. If you say, well, if I am not elect what matters it, let me do as I like; it won't excuse you. But suppose one should say, I wish I knew that the Lord God had in infinite love chosen me; I wish I knew that He had wrapped me up in the bundle of life with the Lord God; I wish I knew that Christ loved me and gave Himself for me; well, according to that wish, so will your conduct be. I mean, if that wish is simply a natural wish - you believe in the Scriptures having been taught to believe them from your childhood - if that wish is only a natural wish, then it will leave you like the sluggard who turns on his bed and says, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep". So his poverty comes as one that travelleth; and his want as an armed man. But if that wish is born in you by the Holy Ghost, then it will shape your course, and many a time this will be your course; you will turn aside and pray to be saved, to know Christ, to love Him. It will many a time put your eyes, so to speak, into the Bible, if haply your eye may light on some sweet promise. It will draw your heart to God in humble supplication. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation". Ah, God will not be mocked. He is a great God, and when men reply against Him, one day He will close their lips. And how do people know that they are chosen? What is God's way of making known to anyone that He has chosen him? The apostle tells us "Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ". Called of God; O what a mercy. Sanctification of the Spirit means His divine work in the heart. Even as sanctification by God the Father means election; as sanctification by God the Son means being purchased and cleansed by His blood; so the sanctification of the Spirit means the work of grace in the heart; humbling work, emptying work, convincing work, killing work; work of prayer, work of faith, of hope, of love, of humbleness of mind. What a work is the work of sanctification. Not improving nature, but saving a sinner, saving a sinner from himself

and from the world. You will never live in the world if sanctification of the Spirit comes to you. "They are not of the world" says the Saviour of their souls, "even as I am not of the world". Your faith will go to your feet and turn them to Zion's hill, and to your heart and to your hands, and make you right and enable you to do what is right. He, whose feet are washed, needs nothing more through this blessed work, and the obedience of faith unto the gospel. We read of many of the priests who were brought to the obedience of faith; so every child of God is brought to this. And what is one sign of it, one part of it? It is this; it brings the sinner before the Lord, down to those terms which God has, and will never, never give up. We deal with one another on more or less equal terms. There are bargains made; there are contracts entered into. A house is bought; it is bought on terms. God has His terms; and what are they? That a sinner shall be nothing but a passive receiver of divine mercy, of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. And when the heart is bent, bowed, humbled and brought right, then is the obedience of faith. Still, the person brought to this state needs something more, and here it is - "And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ". Yes, an obedient heart may be a painfully guilty heart. A sinner brought to the footstool of mercy, crying "Lord, save or I perish", may cry that cry under the sinking load of guilt, under a sinking sense of pollution. He then needs this blood of sprinkling on his conscience. He fears death will enter; yes he fears it greatly. Then that will be brought to pass in him. "When I see the blood I will pass over you". "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin". Now faith in this blood may be in exercise even before the blood itself is sprinkled on the conscience. Yes, "Wash me Saviour or I die" is the cry of a believing heart, sensible of its pollution.

Now the apostle wishes grace unto this people, and peace; wishes that they may be multiplied. "Grace unto you and peace be multiplied". Then he says unto them: "Blessed be the God and Father " that is, praised and honoured and magnified "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to His abundant" or much "mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". Sin killed us; sin is the death of all hope, of all expectation of good. Sin put us out altogether from the presence

of God. As Cain went out from the presence of God and builded a city, so we all, driven out of Eden, went from the presence of God. What a solemn thing. Now regeneration works the mighty change; begotten again by the Holy Spirit. And this is one of the ends of that begetting, one of the effects of it, namely a lively hope in God. Yes, the unsearchable riches of Christ, presented to the view of faith, beget a lively hope that God will have mercy. And this puts such strength into faith as that there is a strong cry: "God be merciful, help, teach, and bless and save". A lively hope - O, what a favour it is. It will hold your spirit up in trouble; it will help you to bear affliction; it will give you patience and work humility of mind in you. A lively hope - a hope of good, a hope of heaven, a hope of knowing Christ, of being united to him - what a difference there is in that from the hope of this world. The hope of this world may, any day, any moment, be washed out by a wave of affliction. Yes, strong hope in the things, numbers of good things, to come, may be washed out by a disabling trouble, a disabling affliction. Now this can never be with the saints; they are begotten to this hope by the Holy Spirit; they are begotten to it by the blood of sprinkling; they are begotten to it that they may hang on God and depend on Him, look to Him, wait for Him and cast their hopes on Him and their cares and their troubles. We cannot be thankful enough if we possess a good hope through grace. Think of what is united to it - not always, not uninterruptedly, in experience, but in truth - namely the everlasting consolation, and this is connected with the inheritance. "Begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". Faith will see Him rising to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that inheritance Christ speaks of when welcoming His people into heaven. "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". This is that which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man". This is that glory that God has prepared for His people and for which He has prepared them. Ah, and when they believe it, and enter somewhat into it, O, how light are their heavy afflictions; how momentary are their long years of trouble. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". It is a great blessing to have the grace of God, and to have some acquaintance with Christ; to be pressing unto the kingdom. There are many enemies and the gate is straight and the

way is narrow, but, blessed with mercy, blessed with the Holy Spirit, the sinner stands in the good old way of prayer, and asks for the old paths of faith and of truth, with his face stedfastly set to go to the heavenly Jerusalem. Then we may miss, we are told. Not by the Lord we are told we may miss, but by erroneous people. If anyone meeting us say, well you have strength enough to go through, the sinner says, no, I have not; I have no strength at all. Says he, under some temptation, I am afraid I shall miss, that I shall come short of the grace of God. But, says the Holy Ghost, to you, and for you, this kingdom is reserved; this inheritance is given to you. Not into your hand, to do with as you will, but poured out into your heart in displays of grace, in discoveries of Christ, in touches of love, in sweet attractions. This kingdom, this inheritance, is given over to you in these ways, but the substance is reserved in heaven for you. Ah, the millions of mercies that the church possesses are not poured into her lap that she may play the prodigal with them, but they are given out in sweet communications of divine goodness from time to time. And then, the best is to come; they are to inherit the kingdom one day. They live out of it, and on it, but they are to enter into it one day. "Reserved in heaven". And then, on the other hand, they are kept for it. Yes, what a mutualness there is here; an inheritance reserved for a sinner; the sinner kept for the inheritance. Working at both ends, God brings His purposes to pass; "working all things according to the purpose of His own will"

Now if we are born again we shall certainly, from time to time, have that strength of faith, that fervency of desire, as will cause us to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling" and beg that we may not live always in doubt and fear and bondage, but have the powerful witness of the eternal Spirit that we belong to the Lord. Then the words of the text: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice", that is, in the inheritance. Rejoice in knowing that you have in heaven a better country and a better inheritance than this world possesses. One may have millions here and be destitute of a grain of grace, a spark of life. How poor that person is. One may live in the Union, and be worth millions of mercies; that is, possess Jesus Christ. How rich that person is. One sings

I'm rich to all the intents of bliss
If Thou, O God, art mine

And the Apostle Peter does not leave out Him who is the very substance of this inheritance, Jesus Christ. "Whom having not seen, ye love". He is the centre, my friends. He is the circle wherein the passions of a new born soul move. He is the circumference of their hope and all their expectations. There is nothing outside Christ; there is nothing beyond Him, to His people. All things here, they are described in that word - "All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever". And the Apostle Peter, quoting this passage out of Isaiah, at the close of this chapter says "And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you". And you know the Word of the gospel contains, and is really, the very Person and work and glory of Jesus Christ. Now dear friends, have we ever, in any measure, rejoiced in the things of God. Take one or two things that are certainly in this inheritance - the very Person of Christ. It is written in the Psalms - "Delight thyself also in the Lord". Now have we been brought to that? Have we, at any time, being convinced of our sins, and of our ruin, and, having had opened to us somewhat of the terrible depravity of our nature, have we, in such a case, so seen the Lord Jesus Christ as to go out after Him, not only in fervent desire, but with some joy in the blessed hope that He belongs to us, that He redeemed us, not with corruptible things but with His Own most precious blood. It is a great thing when Christ is the ground and the object and the centre of our hope; when He is the one object of our love; when faith can plead Him and His blessed work before God the Father; when there is nothing beautiful but Christ and His righteousness; when faith can say "How great is His goodness and how great is His beauty;" when it is seen that from, and through, Him the vineyards are to come in the wilderness - "I will give her her vineyards from thence" - when it is seen that all that we need for justification, for sanctification, for heaven, Jesus Christ is. Then, in some measure, according to the measure of knowledge we have of Him, there is a rejoicing. "Wherein" "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord". No flesh shall glory in God's presence. Why does the Lord deal solemnly, and, as it were, severely, with some of us? Is it not that, reducing human nature

and pride, and grinding to dust our own pretensions, and wisdom and strength, we may receive, into a broken heart, the Lord Jesus, and perceive that He is to us the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. You wont get two heavens, my friends, one here and one hereafter. There is a part of heaven possessed here; it is of the same nature as that in heaven to which we are going. When I say, not two heavens, I mean not your own and Christ; not your wisdom and His; not your goodness and His; not your achievements and His work; but you, dead, lost, ruined, and Christ coming in the riches of His grace, manifesting Himself to you, becoming to you the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Why should we ever think, poor creatures as we are, of boasting in anything or anyone, save Jesus Christ? What says the Lord to His people by Jeremiah (9 v 23) Let not the rich man glory in his riches, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. The Lord takes in everything that we prize naturally in those words. Then, if a man shall not glory in these, what is he to glory in? Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise righteousness and lovingkindness in the earth, for in these things do I delight saith the Lord. Do you think it hard to be pulled to pieces, to be ground to powder, to be troubled on every hand, and to be plagued with sin continually? Poor sinner, when the Lord comes, you will see why He plagued you so. You will see all that in His blessedness made known to you, and you will say, now I can understand a little why I must be so dealt with

Now I see whate'er betide
All is well if Christ be mine

"Wherein ye greatly rejoyce" namely, in Christ.

The second thing is this, in that blessed Covenant ordered in all things and sure. The Scripture makes much of Covenants, specially of two. The covenant of works, there is much made of that. We may dismiss it by saying we have broken it and cannot meet it, and there is an end of it. But no, the Scriptures make much of it. We broke it and we are responsible for breaking it. Yes, sinner, you are responsible for breaking it, hence it is written, God will bring us into judgment. Let not the young man glory in himself, or if he does, let him

consider the solemn irony of Solomon - Let the young man glory in his strength, let him walk in his ways, but let him know this that God will bring him into judgment. This is part of the covenant of works. Cursed is the man that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. I say, God makes much of covenants in the Scripture. Then there is the covenant of grace and much is made of this. Turn to the 89 Psalm at your leisure and read there of the covenant, and again where it is written, the covenant of peace is between them both in the blessed Trinity. This is the covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. And let the saints rejoice in this - rejoice ye saints, rejoice greatly - that the Lord hath made with Christ the Head a covenant which cannot be broken, of which He speaks in the Hebrews by Paul. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind and in their heart will I write them, and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people, and they shall no more say, every man to his neighbour, know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, for I will forgive their sins, and remember their iniquities no more for ever. This is a great covenant is it not? It was made with Jesus in eternity; it was made for the saints. Then it is made with them experimentally when the Lord comes, when He says, let My saints that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice come to Me; gather them to Me. It comes into their souls when the Lord takes them up and cleanses them and washes them and clothes them and gives them His corn and His wine, and His oil, and His gold, and His silver, and He enters into a covenant with them and He says "Thou becamest Mine". I drew thee and thou becamest Mine. Perhaps some poor sinner here may say, I wish the Lord would say that to me. "Thou art Mine". Well, if that wish is born of grace, it will carry you many a time to a throne of grace. Grace draws grace; grace sends the sinner, with it, to the throne of grace. Grace causes the sinner possessing it to pray for grace. O, for grace. God giveth more grace. Press on

If thou press on the crowds will fly
Or if thou faint to Jesus cry
And He will send supplies

Then, when you and the Lord are together, when Christ embraces you and

you embrace Him by precious faith and love, then you will enter into this; you will rejoice in the covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. Then you will see how God has bound you up

I've bound thee up secure

You will see how that He cannot put away, for He hateth to put away. And you will see that the chastening rod is in the covenant; no destroying sword is there, but the chastening rod is there. The sword is outside the covenant; the rod is inside it. Happy the people who are inside the covenant and have got the rod; they miss the sword.

And the third thing to mention about this rejoicing is this; they greatly rejoice in the Word of God at times. I do not mean simply in the Word as we have it, and handle it, and read it - I do not go outside that, no - but this, as it is given, as it is spoken, applied and made over to a sinner in different parts of it, so that he can say: "Thy Word was found". I found it, found it in my heart, found it speaking to me, telling me something; telling me my faults, telling me my weakness, telling me of my sins, telling me that this world is empty and vain and void and wicked and telling me of Christ and of His fulness, and greatness, and graciousness, and glory, and telling me that, though I must needs die and be as water spilt on the ground, there is awaiting me a heaven, a blessed heaven; that, though I have affliction here, there will be none hereafter; that all the hell I am to have is in this world, in a painful experience of my wickedness, in affliction made useful. Some such things are taught the people of God by the Scriptures applied to them. An applied Scripture becomes yours. God will never disown it in you as He will never disown in these pages. He will know His Word wherever He sees and finds it, and if He finds a word in you He will own it. You may be tried about it. The Word, how sweet it is. One Scripture made yours ties you up to God. One Word given to your heart, put into the hand of your faith, makes you right. You will have conflict but of that I am not to speak at the moment. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice". Says the Psalmist, I rejoice at Thy Word as one that findeth great spoil". What a wonder; great spoil; some great possession, something that a man as it were stumbles on and he finds, to his immense surprise, that he has got a

very great treasure. So the child of God, empty and poor and troubled, and tried in himself; tried by sin, tempted by Satan, afflicted by God in providence, one day he finds, to his great surprise, a Scripture talking to him, speaking good things to him, and telling him not to fear, telling him to come to the Lord Jesus, telling him that there is power in God, and love in God, and goodness in God, so that he finds himself lifted out of his misery, carried out from his despairing thoughts, blessed with humble confidence and sweet hope and consolation; so he rejoices. How can he do otherwise? We are not to be suspicious of this. The devil would make us suspicious of joy; he hates it, and so he may say, this is not the usual path of the saints, to rejoice, and he makes you suspicious of yourself because you are blessed. But sing while you can - yes, the days of darkness will be many - sing while you can, and as much as you can. Does the Lord speak? O, what a favour to hear Him. What a mercy to hear Him speak in the gospel. Says one, I am not fit for the gospel. Yes, if you are bad enough for it, you are. Many people are too good for the gospel. It is a great thing to be bad enough for Christ, to be wicked enough and hard and base and hypocritical and guilty and polluted enough for Christ, and when this word comes, it will cover all that, take it all in. It wont tell you you have made a mistake and exaggerated your sinfulness and now, O, and now, Christ has come to put that judgment right. No; it will allow everything you say about yourself in self-condemnation, but it will come over it all. Said He, "I knew thee that thou wouldest deal very treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb. Nevertheless - O what a wonder - nevertheless for Mine own sake, I will do this; I will bless you. Israel hath not been forgotten nor forsaken of his God, though their land was full of sin. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice". And sometimes, it is not often perhaps, but sometimes, there is given a foreview, and there is a forth reaching then of the soul; a foreview of what is to come. Eye hath not seen it, the ear hath not heard it, it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive it, but the Spirit reveals it. "Fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"

Now I must leave off this morning. May these few hints be of use if it please the Lord.

AMEN.