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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 2 April 1922

ACTS 5 v 20

"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the
people all the words of this life"

The Apostles were miraculously brought out of prison and the message to them is not, go and hide yourselves, go and flee from this city, but go and boldly stand and speak to the people who shall be congregated, as is their custom, in the temple, that part of it open to both Jews and Gentiles, and speak, not anything, not your imaginations of things, but speak "all the words of this life"; this life which God has revealed in the Person of His beloved Son. A strange thing, that men in danger, men strangely, divinely, delivered from prison, should go and again put themselves within the power of their persecutor, but this was God's way. His way is best always. Men are safest where God puts them and best. Your way may seem strange; the providence of God may appear to place you in a situation of great danger, perhaps danger to your moral character, or danger of some other kind, and it may be suggested to your mind that the best thing for you to do is to get away from your present situation as quickly as possible; try to secure yourselves from what appear the inevitable dangers. Do not delay; you have just escaped the hand that held you, that afflicted and persecuted you; do not place yourself within its grasp; hasten away. It is a mercy to be kept in the difficult path, to be preserved from consulting flesh and blood as to what to do, when God, in His dealings in His providence has placed us, may be, in a path of danger, in a path of tribulation. The course that these men were to take was told them; they were the servants of the Most High God; they were to speak, not their own words, but His; to do, not their own pleasure, but that which was commanded them, and yet that was their pleasure. What they were to do was to preach. It is wonderful for God to commission a man to preach. It is one thing for the ministry, as a profession, to offer itself to certain religious minds, but it is another thing for God to say in the heart of a man, go and preach. The former deceives many, is useful to

none. They shall not profit His people, for I have not sent them. The latter is God's ordinance, and is made a blessing. Go and speak to them. There are Pharisees and Sadducees; there may be proselytes, Gentiles, enemies to the cross, but they are God's creatures, fallen men. Go, tell them of their condition. Go and tell them of the only way of escape from the wrath to come. Tell them of their utter ruin; tell them of that serpentine nature which is in them; death, hypocrisy, evil of every sort; infidelity, atheism, independence of God. Tell them that they deserve hell; tell them that there is a way of escape. "Speak to them all the words of this life". "Life" here is taken for the whole of salvation, the whole gospel, as in the Epistle of John we have this testimony. "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son". And in the gospel of John it is written that God hath given to His Son to have life in Himself and He gives it to whomsoever He will. It is the whole of the gospel then that these good men, Apostles, servants of God, were to preach. If the Lord will so honour me as to help me this morning, I will speak some of the words; all of them it is impossible to speak in a short time, but some of the words of this life; this eternal life, holy life, wonderful life. Life of justification, life of faith in the Son of God. Wonderful life of forgiveness, of sanctification, of adoption into the family of heaven; of the indwelling of the Spirit and of His mighty and most merciful teaching.

The first particular that I would draw your attention to is this, that they were to preach the resurrection of Him who had been crucified and slain with wicked hands, and this was peculiarly offensive to the Sadducees who denied all resurrection, and the Council appears, at this time, to have been largely made up of Sadducees. With great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ is the keystone. "If Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins"; your faith is vain. We have only hope in this life, if Christ be not raised from the dead; therefore we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen and become the first fruits of them that slept. Faith properly hangs continually about the cross, for there is her life, there is her ground, there is the way of access to God; there is good news from a far country wonderfully expressed. The cross; if you know it, it

will bear your spirit up; it will tell you of God's favour; it will warm your heart, enlarge your understanding, melt your affections, draw out your most lowly love to the Lord Jesus who gave Himself. It will tell you that God, having given His Son for you, will with Him also freely give you all things. The cross is God's highest glory; it is the grandest expression of the wisdom, the love, and the power of the Almighty God in our nature. The cross is the death of sin, it is the destruction of hell, to the Church of the living God. The cross; it was Paul's glory. May it be made our glory. By it he was reconciled to God. By it we, if reconciled, are reconciled. By it alone the peace of God comes. "Peace by His cross has Jesus made". The cross, it is like a great window in heaven through which the light of mercy comes, through which the beams of God's favour come falling on the hearts of men in distress about their sins. My brethren, may the cross be more and more our glory. May we, through grace, be enabled to say: "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". But if Christ did not rise from the dead, His cross would be ineffectual to any good. It could be no good news. Christ buried, Christ retained in the grave, Christ held in the power of death - of what avail would His life be? Of what use would be His death? So the Apostle by the Holy Spirit writing to the Corinthians says "If Christ be not raised from the dead your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins". There is no evidence that God accepted His death as a sufficient sacrifice, as the vicarious offering by which sin is put away. There is no proof that Christ was pleasing to His Father in His death. No proof that any sin was destroyed, that any sinner was saved. But the emphatic testimony is this "Now is Christ risen from the dead", and He showed Himself alive to His disciples by many infallible proofs. See Me, He said; handle Me. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have". My dear friends, a risen Christ is All and in All to His children, His people, whom He redeemed. Go and tell them this. O, says Peter, the Lord raised Him up; He has set Him at His right-hand in the heavens. He is there; living to intercede, there. Having now given to Him all power in heaven and in earth, He is there to rule. There He receives the adoration of angels; there He commands them and they are His willing servants. There, in His holy and mighty hands are all things. All the threads of our lives, all the circumstances by which we are moved here and there, all the

difficulties we are confronted with and the troubles that burden us; all, all are under the management of Christ, now risen from the dead; raised by the power of His Father. Raise your downcast eyes, O believer, and see this blessed Saviour in heaven at the right-hand of the Majesty of God. A risen Christ is the anchorage; hope is the anchor, and it casts itself into that which is within the veil whither our forerunner is gone for us even Jesus, now to appear in the presence of God for us. A risen Christ says to His children: "Because I live ye shall live also". And when His Spirit lets down into the heart of one fearing himself above all things else, fearing his weakness - "Because I live ye shall live also" - if He lets, I say, that down into his heart, all is well. New courage is felt; fresh strength is experienced. A risen Christ is the Intercessor, the only Intercessor. Think of what Christ lying in the grave would mean; think of what Christ in heaven means. Lying in the grave it would mean a contradiction of the Scripture, that He should not see corruption. In heaven Christ means this, that when you cannot speak for yourself because of your sins and guilt and fear, He opens His mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. He opens His mouth; He pleads the cause of the poor and needy. So Christ risen, manifested by the Spirit, is the strong drink of the gospel. "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish and wine to those that be of heavy heart". And, offensive though this was to the Sadducees and to all the Jews, because they thought, by killing Him, they would rid themselves of One whose pretences, as they spoke, were for ever banished. How could they bear to hear that One whom they had put out of the way, even Jesus, was living? How could they bear to hear that the Lord of life and glory, whom they hated and derided, was in the very midst of them as dwelling in the hearts of His servants, the Apostles. Hold fast then, dear friends, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as essential as His death to salvation. No salvation without the resurrection of Christ. If faith is raised up to see Him there she will be bold; she will go to Him with large petitions; she will tell Him the case that a sinner is in; the fears he entertains, the troubles he is burdened with, the necessities that press upon him. She will tell Him all these things. O, Christ risen from the grave is the fountain of life to His people and the Holy Spirit brings of that fountain into their hearts. I have mentioned this first although it follows what I am next to say. I

mention it first because it was, at this moment, with regard to the Apostles, a chief theme. You have crucified Him, said Peter to the Jews, but God has raised Him from the dead. You thought you had got rid of Him; He is here, He is in our hearts. He is in heaven, He intercedes. He has sent the Spirit down, and what you thought to be new wine, making those who were converted on the day of Pentecost speak with tongues, was nothing less than His precious gift of the Holy Spirit; the promise of the Father which He shed forth that day, and that promise is with us and in us. I mention the resurrection first of all because it was, with the Apostles at that moment, the keystone of all their building, the essential theme of their teaching.

But in the next place I would speak of the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ was the putting away of sin. He made an end of it; He destroyed death and him that had the power of it, by dying. The sacrifice of Christ was the work of the Priest, our High Priest. It was the activity of our High Priest; it was the giving of Himself without spot to God; it was the pouring out of His soul unto death. It was the satisfaction of divine justice; that was effected by Christ's death. It was the removal of the curse that hung over the Church as well as over others as they were sinners. It was the appeasing of God's wrath; it was the fulfilling of the law, not its destruction. I came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil. It was the removal of every possible disability that attached to the Church of Christ as fallen. It was the opening of a new and living way; it was the gift of a plea which should be in the mouth of faith to the end of time, a plea which, offered to God, could not be disregarded by Him. O, the sacrifice of Christ is the ground on which we are to stand, the hope by which we are to be supported, the plea by which we are to prevail with God, the righteousness by which we are to be justified, the fountain in which we are to be plunged and cleansed from all sin. It was that that pleased the Father, that glorified every attribute of Deity, that brought in an everlasting righteousness and that opened the way that shall never be closed, on which a lion, a ravenous beast, shall never be found, in which God meets His children, falls on their necks and kisses them with such a kiss as to reconcile them entirely to Himself and to present them faultless eventually before the throne of His glory. And Peter was to

teach this and John was to teach this. What a subject! This was the laying of the foundation. "Behold I lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone". Now if we feel as vile as we can possibly feel ourselves to be, so as to feel shut out from God, hopeless in self, fearful of the day of judgment, conscious that we are not fit to die, not capable of living as we should; if, I say, this is our present experience, then I would say humbly and boldly, O sinner, behold a way to God; behold a new way, not anticipated in creation, not manifested in Eden, until the fall. Behold a way in which God, holy, glorious, will meet with you and kiss you, cleanse you, justify you, and find no fault with you. You will be always finding fault with yourselves, you who know yourselves, and often God will find fault with you as to some conduct, and your spirit, and your heart, and your thoughts, but, viewing you in the Lord Jesus, He will never find fault with you, but present you to Himself without spot, blameless and unrepensible in His sight. What a subject for the Apostles. Here were Pharisees, here were men who had said to the Lord probably, some of them, we were never in bondage; who asked the question - Are we blind also? And they said perhaps, "Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him." And they thought they were clear; that this, as they supposed, this usurper - as they thought with a kingdom not His own - was now out of the way. Said Peter, you crucified Him, but He is the salvation of all who are taught to go to God by Him as sinners. He, and He alone, we, His Apostles, preach to you as the one only sacrifice, the only way to the living God, the only way of pardon, and justification. My friends, does sin trouble you? Does sin often shut you out in your experience from the presence of God? Does it make your profession questionable to yourselves? Does it make you wonder how God has been able to bear with you so long? Does it defile your conscience? Does it threaten to harden your heart? This is what I am to tell you. I am not to contradict your painful experience; I am not to say you exaggerate your case, to tell you that sin is not half as bad as you think it is and it is not that separating thing that you feel it to be; I am not to say that. I am to say this, that though your case were a million times worse than it is, the blood of Christ thy soul can cure. Yes, this is the remedy. If I know what pleasure is in my heart, it is this, to tell you what a full Christ can do for a man who is full of sin and full of conviction and full of trouble. He can do all that he needs. Says a sinner, my

conscience tells me that God can never accept anything that is not perfect, and it tells you the truth if it tells you that. Then you say that cuts me off, because I know I am not perfect. Yes, your premises are all right, but your conclusion is false. If you stand alone, woe unto you, but if, feeling your sins, the dear Lord Jesus pleads His vicarious sacrifice, it answers the case absolutely. Fuller's soap, and nitre and tears and washings and all those things that nature, that a legal heart, a religious mind, would dictate as being necessary, none of those things, not all of them together, shall be useful. No; that that can do the turn, that can meet your conscience, that can satisfy your heart's desire, is the blood of Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". What a subject for God to give a man to preach. What a theme for these holy Apostles to preach. There is a fountain promised, spoken of by Zechariah, a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Now you, my servants, Peter and John, go and stand in the temple - there may be mockers, there will be enemies, but some shall receive - go, and speak to the people all the words of this life. The death of Christ is the life of the Church; the death of Christ is the removal of sin from her; the death of Christ is the infinite satisfaction and pleasure of Deity. All the rest, that God took after His six days work in creation was as nothing to this rest, this savour of rest, the rest His attributes had and have, the rest that His mind has, that His will has, that all His purposes have; the rest is in this blessed death, this precious death.

Go and tell the people this. There are a good many things today told in pulpits that are beside this and outside of it. When Christ honoured the temple by entering it, we are told He took a whip of small cords, for He found money changers with merchandise, and merchants and thieves. He turned them out and said ye have made the house which should be a house of prayer, a den of thieves. And today there is the merchandise of various subjects occupying the time and talents of preachers, but this is, alas, too much left, this blessed death, this one hope, this only ground of hope. May the Lord speak it to your hearts and to mine from time to time.

Go and tell the people that Christ who was crucified by wicked

hands is now exalted at the right hand of God, for this particular purpose, "to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins". This is good news. O, Sirs, if you be bad enough and hard enough and wicked enough in your own feelings to need repentance and to ask it of Him, who alone can give it, there is a Prince in heaven, a Prince of life with His hands full of mercy, His heart full of love, His bowels full of compassion, and His mind determined to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. "To give repentance", the thing you want, and the thing which, if you could procure by yourself, you would take to the market to buy something with. Yes, it is in one sense, one may say, it is easier to go with a broken, repentant, contrite heart than to go with a hard heart. Thomas Hardy advised one, in one of his letters, to try what hard hearted prayers would do, and some of us would not pray sometimes if we were only to pray when we had a soft heart. But to pray with a hard heart and ask for a soft one; to pray for a prayer; to pray for repentance; to pray that God would give you His Holy Spirit to bring the grace of Christ to your soul, that that grace may soften your heart and make you repent of sin, not because there is a hell in which sin shall be punished, but because there is a cross where Christ suffered for sin. He can give repentance, such repentance as is so sincere as never to be repented of. Do you lack repentance? Pray for it. Who has it to give? Christ has gifts to give away and, remember this, He fills the poor with good things; the rich He sends empty away. "And forgiveness of sins". "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile". "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered". There is hardly a sweeter feeling to be had in this life than the feeling that your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake. Forgiveness is an act passed on a person. It is the act of God passed on a conscience that is burdened with sin and the guilt of sin. A sovereign act, an act of love, and may we believe it. And an act of justice. We incurred a debt, a debt we could never pay; Christ paid it and God will not demand a second payment for the same debt; He cannot. Christ forgives sin; He put all away; every sin put away. And now true religion is an application of that which Christ effected on the cross. True religion is an application of the death of Christ to a sinner and the forgiveness of the sinner's sins, the removal of them from his conscience, the satisfaction of an exacting

conscience. I say an exacting conscience; a conscience quickened by the Holy Ghost is an exacting conscience. No sacrifices under the old dispensation ever made a conscience perfect. No bringer of sacrifices was ever made perfect as pertaining to his conscience by all the sacrifices which he offered according to God's commandment but Jesus Christ did put away sin. Therefore, said the Lord, go and tell them ^{of} this life; tell them that the death of Christ shall be their life and tell them that Christ is exalted to give repentance to them and forgiveness of sins, and tell them that if they confess their sins God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

Go and tell them that the covenant of grace is ratified by the blood of Christ; His blood is called the blood of the everlasting covenant; that as many as the Lord our God shall call are His in this covenant, bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God; that Christ, having loved His own, loved them to the end; that, according to this covenant, He will never give them up; that although they may vex and grieve His Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit shall be turned to be their enemy and fight against them in their consciences by reproofs and often in providence by adversity, yet He will say: "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him". When Ephraim was reproved he said he had been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and the chastisement of God had been terrible to him. Now after he repented he said he smote upon his thigh and God said to him: "How shall I give thee up? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? How shall I make thee as one of the destroyed cities?" There is a covenant of grace; it contains a rod to be sure, but also it contains this, the removal of the folly from the heart of a child by the use of the rod and it contains this: "My covenant will I not break not alter the thing that is gone out of my lips". The covenant will never let you sin cheaply, but it will never let you sin fatally. It will make sin bitter, but grace will teach you this sin is put away by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Go, and tell them this. Tell them I am God and change not, and that therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Tell them that I go and prepare a mansion for them and if I go and prepare a mansion for

them I will come again and receive them unto Myself, that where I am, there they shall be also. Tell them that when I chasten them I do it as a Father chastens a son in whom He delights. Tell them that I intend good; that they did, for a time, for a few days submit themselves to their earthly parents who chastised them after their own pleasure, but that I do chastise you for your good that you may be partakers of My holiness. So the Apostles had good news and that good news we have in the inspired Scripture and poor ministers today, sent of the Holy Spirit to preach, they too preach these things. "Go and speak all the words of this life". And when they are received the effect is clearly seen. The testimony of the Apostles was gladly received and it is still so. As the Holy Spirit is with any minister of the gospel and the minister speaks according to the word of truth, there is some effect sooner or later manifested, for, says the Lord, "My Word shall not return unto Me void; it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." May the Lord own His gospel. I am glad that He has promised to bless His gospel, whatever failings there may be in the preaching of it. He has promised to bless His gospel, and I hope He will bless it among us for the glory of His grace, and for our everlasting benefit.

AMEN.