

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
28th December 1930

Text Acts 5 verse 20

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

A testimony to the interest of some, in the preaching of the gospel, we have, in another place, when the hearers at the close of the discourse, said, they wished to hear, the same words again, "that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." (Acts 13 verse 42). That will ever be, more or less distinctly, the feeling, the desire, of all who know and receive the gospel, in the power of the Holy Ghost. They are the best hearers, they are the most critical hearers, and having faith, they mix it with the word, which makes it profitable to them. And so they are really good hearers, glorifying God. Might I hope, I believe I have some such hearers in this small congregation.

I have no new things to bring, I am not to philosophise, about this or that subject but to speak things plainly. To speak as John Bunyan would say, so as to be understood. Though divine things are not understandable by human reason, they are incomprehensible, but by faith they are apprehensible, and apprehended. They are laid hold of when people want God, then they desire to apprehend Himself. I suppose that if the question were put to some of you, as to whether you desire God or not, you would not be able to say, you do not desire Him. Fear may be in your heart, as to whether He will have anything to do with you, but that is another matter.

"The words of this life", which are the text, are the whole gospel centring, in finding their substance in the Person of Christ. How often I have said this in this pulpit, what pleasure I have found sometimes, in quoting these words of good Joseph Hart:

Christ is the friend of sinners;
Be that forgotten never;
A wounded soul, and not a whole,
Becomes a true believer; (Gadsby's 806 verse 1)

Some of the words of this life, I would speak about this evening, begin with the love of God. Strictly, theologically speaking, I ought to put this first of all, because it is the source of all good.

God gave His Son, because of His love to the world, but I would speak of it, in respect of its being a later experience, than some other things are, with the Lord's people. Though it is first as a fountain, it is not first as an experience. What would some of you do, what would you give, if you could be assured, that God who is love, fixed His love on you? and for that love's sake gave His Son for you.? It is a beautiful thing, it is a most glorious name, that is given to God, "God is love." (1 John 4 verse 8). This love is the most fruitful, sweet, consoling, jealous love, as all know, to whom it is given. If we are wandering from God, this love will move Him, to make a hedge of thorns about us, that we may not find our paths. And if we are too determined, to be deterred by a hedge of thorns, this love will say, then I will build a wall of hewn stone around her. This love is so jealous, that it stirs up trouble, it expressed itself first of all, in the garden of Eden. When man was fallen and defiled, "The Lord God said unto the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed:" (Genesis 3 verse 15). It is so jealous, that if you have got an idol, and have set it up in your heart, He will burn that idol, or smash it, and grind it to powder, love will do it.

If you receive some error; love will come and rebuke you for it, and take it away. If you walk in some improper path, love will stop you, if like a foolish sheep you are running away, love will go after you on a mountain, and if you are determined to do any wrong things, God will deal with you very sharply, and all out of His love. Men who naturally are profound thinkers, when they think of the love of God, think they are superior, they judge the love of God by human love, which is exceedingly foolish. That is pulling Jehovah down, to their own level.(Psalm 50 verse 21). The saints are made to perceive, that this love is infinite and eternal, and that its decrees, are all to be fulfilled, and carried out.

There is consolation in love, consolation? When you are troubled by sin and the devil, this love comes, and who can say how certain scriptures, have sparkled and been more brilliant, than the terrible crystal in the eyes of believers, who have said, O if only we were loved of God., if only we knew that God loved us. What would you not give (I used to feel when I was a young man, and did not know this love of God,) if I had a world, I would give it, to have one sensation of this love in my heart. God is love, what are the proofs of it in scripture? The first, is the gift of His Son, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3 verse 16). What is the proof of it, that this only begotten Son of God voluntarily died? vicariously died, lovingly died, because He loved.(John 14 verse 15).

And by this death of His, procured all the goodness of God, given to the saints, and the Holy Ghost given by Christ, to His people, brings this love in sweet steams into their souls. It takes the sting out of trouble, it takes all the penal dealings of God with reprobates, away from these people. Sometimes it makes a sinners bed, makes a bed in a fire, consoles the heart when there is great affliction in circumstances. This love is not controlled by circumstances, human love is, but divine love is not. God expresses His Being by expressing His Love. Well that is a good saying then, is it not, a saying of love, a saying that will never be undone.

Whom once He loves he never leaves,
But loves him to the end. (Gadsby's 351 verse 3)

It is beyond comprehension, but not beyond feeling. When men get it in their hearts, they feel it, nobody knows but the people who get it, what it is. The swelling, the emotion, the repentance, the sweetness, the attraction, the submission filling a sinner, love divine, it is sweet. I only know enough of it to say, these small things, if I knew more, I should say more about it. But I can say this, it is just that, which when felt lifts a sinner out of his trouble, while he remains in it. Makes him careless of his care, strengthens him in weakness, brings him to the sweetest and most complete submission, to the whole will of God. It makes God first, and self nothing, it fills the soul experiencing it, with great wonder that God could have anything to do with one so vile.

It is free, nothing hinders it, we talk about things being as free as air, this is more free, there is nothing like it. It is free beyond all proper or full conception, there is no adequate word for its freeness. Nothing hinders it, if you put a piece of straw on this book, and the straw could say, nothing shall hinder me, if a shower of rain came, where would it be? Where would your sins be, if the love of God came. Ministers have to say this, God is love when He sends trouble. He is love, when He rebukes, and is love when He binds you, love when He sets your sins before you, in the light of His holy character, that He may bring you to His footstool. O dear friends, you won't lose a sense of sin, by the love of God in your hearts, you won't lose repentance by the love of God shed abroad in your hearts. O it is wonderful, the sweet repentance, the grateful consideration that people feel, when they know that God loves them. I have wondered at this love, the Infinite Being could only love sinners, nobody else could, so take courage, you who want it, who cannot rest without it, who long sometimes, in perhaps reading that word, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:" (Jeremiah 31 verse 3). Long to hear it spoken to you.

It may come without any verbal expression of it, and may be so sweetly, powerful, and wonderfully shed abroad in your heart, without a word. that you would not be able, dutifully to doubt it. This is love, sweet love, omnipotent love, endless love, covenant love. You may have a cross, and the devil makes you look at that cross, he tries to write hatred on that cross, and you are unable to remember, at that moment what Solomon said, "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them". (Ecclesiastes 9 verse 1). But the devil wants you to believe, and tries to make you believe, that because the law, has that revenge against you which you deserve, therefore this cross comes, but Cowper says:

Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me. (Gadsby's 282 verse 2)

Most people have had the most terrible trials, the greatest sinners get the greatest comforts, not because they are the greatest sinners, but because God is free in His love to them. If any sinner could stop the flow of divine love, by his sins, I know that sinner. None of you ever fought against God as I did. Rutherford said, I did not love Him, but He would love me, and I could not refuse to be loved. You will understand that, when you get it, and you will really enter into it. Well this is a wonderful saying, let me say it again, God is love. If your distractions will allow you to listen, listen to this, God is love. The Holy Ghost will enable me, one of these days, and you will say, the preacher did not tell us half of it, and no preacher ever can do.

Well beloved friends, let me take another step, and speak to you, about what God says He will do. There are breaches, often between the Lord and our souls, He says He will heal the breaches. "for I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Exodus 15 verse 26). and as the Psalmist says, "O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed." (Psalm 6 verse 2). Heal me for I have sinned, what a sore is infidelity, what a running sore is lust, of some sort, what a sore is dreadful unbelief, the chief of sins. Who can cure these sins? the Good Physician. It is a good saying "I am the Lord that healeth thee". Listen to it if you can, listen to it. I repeat, it is a good saying. A saying of life, and it has life in it, as when one whose life has been threatened by disease, or by illness is restored, his life as it were is renewed. So when your souls have been sick, through some sin, and the gospel comes in the power of the Holy Ghost, and Christ's precious blood is applied, then this awful disease and running sores are healed.

And the minister must stand and say this, there is no cure for sin, but the blood of Christ. If you read in scripture the doctrine of leprosy, and the remedy for it, you will find that God, did not prescribe any herb or medicine. Only one person could deal with the leprosy, and that was the priest. And so the awful leprosy of our sins, the irruptions of this leprosy, the outbreaks of it here and there. These can only be cured by the Good Physician. "I am the Lord that healeth thee".

The next word I would say, is this, it is a word of peace, a real peace. Peace is good if it is good peace. preaching Peace by Jesus Christ, who "having made peace through the blood of His cross," (Colossians 1 verse 20). "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross;" (Colossians 2 verse 14). If it is out of the way, out of God's way, it will be out of your way in God's time. Peace? This divine peace is not subject to circumstances, but they are subject to it. When this peace comes, it keeps the heart and mind by Jesus Christ. It is beautifully expressed as in the Trinity, and its Members, in "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." (Numbers 6 verses 24 -26). That is the peace of God, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, to troubled people, to people who have enemies. "And this Man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." (Micah 5 verse 5). The Assyrian there represents the enemy, of all the people of God to the end of time, and the man who is the peace, is Jesus Christ. He is "The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9 verse 6). O brethren, this blessed peace, controls a troubled heart, and turns trouble away, it turns trouble into a blessing, gives strength and comfort, and enables the person who has it, to say that he has perfect peace. In some scriptures peace means boldness, and when you get that peace, that is thus spoken of in (Numbers 6 verse 26), the peace that comes by the Prince of peace, you have a completeness, a sweet completeness, Christ is with you, and you are with Him.

Matters then are straight, which in themselves are crooked, "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:" (Isaiah 40 verse 4). This Prince of Peace walks with people sometimes, and then they are full of peace. It is beyond me to express it adequately, I know what it means, I know what it is to have peace in trouble, and so to have no trouble. So do some of you know, and all this is by the gospel. The word of life, a minister has to say, is "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble". (Job 14 verse 1). And he has also to say, sinners who are in trouble, are to have peace by Jesus Christ.

Peace by His cross has Jesus made;
The church's everlasting Head
O'er hell and sin has victory won,
And, with a shout, to glory gone. (Gadsby's 925 verse 1)

Look for this peace, not in yourselves, not in your circumstances, not in your friends, not in the church, no, not in the church, but in the Head of the church. Christ procured it, the Spirit bestows it, Christ is the fulness of it. the Spirit brings it from Him. Consolation is in Christ, comfort is in Him, all because He is the Prince of Peace. He speaks the word of power, and the word of strength, who is the strength of Israel but Christ. Do you think that Paul had any other in his mind, when he said to Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 2 verse 1).

This strength consists of an armour, and the armour of God is spoken of in two ways, in the gospel. The armour of light, that is so revealing. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1 verse 5). And when that divine light shines in your heart and understanding, then you are children of light, and of the day, not of the night, and of darkness. Then you know what to avoid, here is the world, and the light says, do not go into that, here is some darling sin, some master sin, and the light shows it to you, in all its hideousness. There is some temptation, hurled at you, and the light shows it to be a temptation. Some error may be presented to you, but in the light of God, you see it to be error, something contrary to the gospel. You know what to avoid, every minute you are in this light. You may often be allured out of it, but every minute you are in it, you know what to avoid. You know where to walk and what to hold. In the light shall we see light, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," (1 John 1 verse 7). You have fellowship with God, and God has fellowship with you. It is all very solemn, very humbling, it brings you to depend upon God. Now that is the armour of light.

"I am come a light into the world, an whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness." (John 12 verse 46). He walks in the light of the gospel, it is called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Timothy 1 verse 11. Showing a sinner how he is justified, how he is sanctified, how he is saved. Teaching him the blessedness of federal union with the Lord Jesus. And sometimes it shines on trouble, and the light says, this is not in anger. It shines on chastisement, and says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not.?" (Hebrews 12 verse 7). This is a sign of sonship, this is a token of love, it shines on affliction.

Then you will see the difference between a mere living through trouble, and a receiving it, as sent by God to you for your good. It is one thing to say, this is a trouble, this is an evil and I must bear it. One thing for you to philosophise about it, and say everybody has trouble, and why should not I have trouble. It is another thing to say, the Lord has sent it, and cry to Him for submission to it, and help to take it as being sent by God. Turn it into chastening, the chastening of a son, a chastening that you need, and pray for help to quietly endure it. The armour of light will direct you to the throne of grace, and say wait there. To "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we (you) may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4 verse 16).

The other word about the armour of God, you have in the Ephesians, "Put on the whole armour of God," (Ephesian 6 verse 11), "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 2 verse 1). Take the helmet, take the shield, take the breastplate, take the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, take the sword of the Spirit, (Ephesians 6 verses 11-17). And if you have that armour, then you will "be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (verse 13). And this is one of the sayings, this is what a prophet must do, say to the people, you have no armour of your own, you are exposed to the world, you are exposed to the devil, you are exposed to a more subtle enemy, even the flesh, and if you have no armour, now take to you the whole armour of God. That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

It is a wonder to be kept, to be kept standing, many and many a fall have some of us had, but mercifully not open falls, to bring reproach on the name of Christ, but a fall inwardly, never, never to be expressed. It is not needful for you, when you sin in secret, to tell any man about it, but it will be needful for you, to confess it to God. When you see it you will be guilty, as you remember, it is written, that when a man sinned in ignorance, and it was brought to his knowledge, then he was guilty. Really guilty when he did it, but guilty in his conscience when he came to know it. So you will find, whenever you know that you have fallen, than you will come to this confession, not to any man, but to God. Put on the armour, take to you says the Apostle, the whole armour of God. It is thus that the Power of God is known, you say, I want things with power, well what do you mean, when you say a word came on to your mind, but it was not powerfully spoken, what exactly is it that you mean? Perhaps you scarcely know. May I try to explain a little thus, how a word falls on your mind, it diverts your attention from some carnal thing, in which you were engaged, and takes it to God.

It stirs your mind up to prayer, it moves you to say, O that I had this always with me. That I could pray, believe, seek God, wait upon Him, and wait for Him. Now what do you call that? I call it power, and not a little. It is not a little that can take a man away from a natural, and pleasing occupation, or any occupation, and lift his soul up to heaven. A word falls on your mind, to reprove you for some sin, you listen to it, and you say, Lord I am guilty, what was that? Grace, grace moving, teaching, opening, aludging in your conscience some sin. When you are reprov'd for your sins, do not say there is no power in the word. Or sometimes a word will come to direct your attention to the cross, or the atonement of Christ, and your heart hungers and thirsts for a view of it. You may say to a friend, I had no power, but I did feel an attraction. What is the attraction? the cross? What is that attraction to the cross? What is, it but power.

We understand a little of the law of attraction naturally, O the law of attraction spiritually is very great. Something falls upon your heart and draws you to the cross, now I will tell you what that is, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6 verse 45). This is coming, it is the movement of faith in the soul. So the word of power is one of the words of the gospel. Where does the power reside for salvation? in Christ. He is the power of God, so when you find an influence, a movement, something penetrating, some persuasive word influencing you, drawing you out of yourself unto Christ, or after Him, do not say it is not power.

Lastly, not because it is all that is in the word, but to me lastly, speak the word of the resurrection. What an offence this was to the Sadducees, they were angry and furious, because the Apostles would preach it, and they preached it out of their experience, they had seen the Lord. They had see Him before He was crucified, they saw Him dead, they went to His grave, and saw His grave empty. He came to them, and showed Himself alive, after His passion. And when they were commanded not to teach or preach in this name. O said Peter, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4 verse 20). Experimental religion is a very beautiful thing, it has much fear, some confidence, much absence, some presence, much affliction, some comfort, and all by the power of Christ's resurrection. He presses man down to self despair, to raise them up to a good hope through grace. He brings them to feel their weakness, that they may know what the power of the resurrection means.

There are two resurrections, one is the resurrection of the soul, when it is born again, and raised up to spiritual matters. Every new born person knows, that sooner or later, it means conflict.

Sin will never readily give way, Satan is not easy to put off, the world has its claims and presses them, but the power of this blessed life in the soul, from the resurrection of Christ, is more than all the rest. So a man says, I lift up my soul, lumpish, heavy, inert in itself, I lift up my soul unto God. It is a good thing that every praying man is a miracle. every time that you lift up your soul to God, you are a miracle, just a miracle of that power of Christ's resurrection. And if you can enter into what Paul teaches about this, He prays, That... "the eyes of your understanding (of the Ephesian Church) being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of (their) his calling, And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," (Ephesians 1 verses 18 - 21. Now that is wrought in measure, in every believer, sooner or later. Some of you know what I am speaking is the truth.

You know you have none of this power in yourselves, but you also know, what it has been for a sacred power, to come into your hearts and lift you up above all care, above sin, above temptation, and above the tempter, above all principalities and powers, and set you in heavenly things, or places with Christ. That is the power of His resurrection, and in a measure, every child of God comes to it, sooner or later. He follows his Lord, follows his Lord in the power of the Lord. He follows his Lord in the path of life, which is shown to him, as it was shown to Christ. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life:" (Psalm 16 verse 11). It is a great mercy, a very great mercy, my unbelieving heart has had this power in a small measure.

Well the second resurrection, is the resurrection of the body. The body never loses its substance, it was made out of the dust, and to dust it will return. (Genesis 3 verse 19). It loses its form, its beauty, O it is a repulsive thing to think about, but it is a truth. We must say this, it is one of the sayings, "It is appointed unto man once to die," (Hebrew 9 verse 27). And this body, this very body, do not think about it in a natural way, to try to understand it. If you do, you may be landed in some dreadful thoughts, about its impossibilities. In a way, I dread to think about it naturally, I have done it a great number of times. Think of Adam's body, Abel's body, and the bodies of all who have died since the fall, and their very bodies, their identical bodies, must be raised again. Now take that beautiful chapter, which I read, I do not like it to be locked up in the cemetery. It is a beautiful word for the church of God.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15 verses 53 - 55). A believer given to Christ, can there listen to his dying Saviour, who, when He had poured out His soul unto death, when He knew all was accomplished, said, "It is finished". (John 19 verse 30). Then He made an end of sin, then He brought in an everlasting righteousness, then the temporary separation of His soul from His body, took place. And so it will be, with every child of God, in the whole church. The temporary separation of two parts, that make one person, will end.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (1 Thessalonians 4 verse 14).

Amen