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

*Text Acts 5 verse 20*

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

There was never a perfect church on earth, and there never will be. In the infant church in apostolic days, the very earliest days, hypocrites were found in the persons of Ananias and his wife. They lied unto God, became servants of Satan, and died by the mighty hand and terrible judgement of God. The preaching of the apostles, notwithstanding this, was mighty through the Holy Ghost, and they preached that wondrous doctrine, which is the key stone, of the arch of the building. The resurrection of Christ, with such efficacy, that the powers that were then in being, the Sadducees, were enraged, were angry and cast some of the apostles into prison. They thought they would close their mouths, but they reckoned without God, as all men do by nature, ourselves included, all men, think and scheme, without any thought of God.

You, who have not God in your hearts, as a Saviour, naturally think without Him, or if you think of Him, you think Him to be "such an one as thyself:" (Psalm 50 verse 21). Grace makes a difference, nothing else can make a radical difference. They cast these apostles into prison, and the angel of the Lord came, and opened the prison door, and gave these apostles, as it were, a new commission in the words of our text. Do not turn away from Jerusalem, the prison is open, flee from it, but not away from your work.

God will have His people attend to their work, especially His ministers. Satan seeks to drive them away from it by various means, he attempts to close the mouths of men sent to preach, but the attempt is useless, utterly fruitless, so said the angel "Go, stand and speak in the temple", the place of public worship, for the saints then had no places of their own in which to meet, they must meet in the temple. And in those days, God was so with His people, that they had favour with all men in Jerusalem. And they went from house to house, keeping the commandment of the apostles, and having the joy of the Lord, day by day. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2 verse 47). The commission given to these apostles, was, speak unto the people "all the words of this life", that is to say, the gospel. And the substance of the it which is the Lord Jesus and His resurrection.

This substance of the gospel, was at that time, the special doctrine which, all the Jews in power were speaking and acting against. They were to go and preach the resurrection of Christ. Whom "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Acts 2 verses 23 & 24). Now preach and propound, a risen Saviour. This is the business of ministers sent of God in our day, this is a summary of their work. If you would but preach more experience, now what is experience? What is true Christian experience? Have I rightly understood it? My answer is, it begins in regeneration, with a new creation in a persons soul. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."(1 Peter 1 verse 23).

It rises in conviction of sin, and issues in this petition, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18 verse 13). And the answer is "Thy sins are (all) forgiven." (Luke 7 verse 48). That brings a person into sensible union, and communion with God. Twenty words suffice to say it, but years must be swallowed up, by the Holy Spirit in teaching it. This you will find to be Christian experience. Down goes self, but up rises Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease."(John 3 verse 30). He must be glorious, I must be a poor polluted, lost sinner. I must lose myself, hate my life, forsake my friends, not easy, very solemn, very weighty, very humbling, I must lose my faith, my natural faith, my beautiful religion, my comfortable profession. I must lose all my beauty, I must be reduced to that condition that is expressed in the word, lost, that I may be saved.

What do you think of it? It was a great instruction that God gave to Daniel, for Nebuchadnezzar and to his children. That the great image of gold and silver, of brass, of iron and of clay, standing up a great image must be broken to pieces, ground to dust, and blown away by the wind, and that must be done. That is done, by the stone cut out without hands, increasing and filling the world. (Daniel 2 verse 31 o 35). Filling the soul of a sinner, filling conscience with peace, filling his afflictions with love, filling his will with submission, filling his understanding with the gracious light of the gospel, making him a new man in Christ. I would like much of this experience, and I pray you may get it also. Oh you will be men in Christ if you get this. You will be as "The trees of the Lord are full of sap;" (Psalm 104 verse 16). If you get this, you will be to His praise and glory, but not else. If you feel weak, if you are growing worse, do not try to be better. If you feel corruptions rising, do not say I will crush them. If you feel infidelity, do not say I will believe, why not?

Because you could not do it. But One can do it, ask Him to do it,

"save me, O God:" (Psalm 3 verse 7). Save me. It was a great preaching, that these apostles preached, that is to say, they preached the light of the glorious gospel, the gospel of the blessed God. The everlasting gospel of the kingdom, that shall never have an end, that shall never be broken. If God will help me, I will preach this gospel, (to me but a little longer, while I live,) I wish I might preach it effectual, to your good. P

I had a dread yesterday on my mind, which I will name to you, and which I expressed in prayer, again and again, I said 'Lord if Thou hast no more use for me, if I am not to be useful to the people, mercifully take me away'. Just to speak about things, is a sort of terror to my mind, at this time. Just to go on talking about God, to you, with no effect, is not beneficial to me, the thought is painful. Now what are the words of this life?

I say first of all, we must notice the Person of Christ, and the scriptures are at my back in this assertion. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" said Christ, (John 14 verse 6. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (2 John 5 verse 11). "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". (John 6 verse 53). "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." (John 6 verse 63). God hath given His Son who has life in Himself, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we might know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5 verse 20).

What are you stretching after? How many here can say honestly, as they know themselves, we are hungry for God? That is the thing, and if you grow in grace, you will grow in a sense of hunger. If you grow in grace, you will grow in a sense of your need. A creature is a needy dependant person, and grace makes that dependant, a depending person from time to time. We preach this Jesus, said the apostles, preaching is declaring, proclaiming, opening, alleging studying, and it is this speaking the words of this life, that really constitutes the ministry of the everlasting gospel. So Christ is preached as the foundation, "For other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3 verse 11). He is preached as the righteousness of His people, "righteousness delivereth from death." (Proverbs 10 verse 2). He is preached as the life of their souls, the breath of their souls, the motion of their souls, the uplifting of their souls, the power of His resurrection that causes a man to say honestly, and really to God.

"Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift I up my soul." (Psalm 25 verse 1). You

will never be without this Person, you cannot be wrong if you have Him. You will have your days of darkness, you will have your seasons like a tree, but you will never get on without Him. The winter is a sad season, but it does not kill the life. The sap is not in the trunk, or the branches, but in the root. And where Christ is, there is this blessed life, and it is always enough, to make a man really know that unless he has God as His God, Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Ghost for his teacher, he is not, and cannot be right. This is the word of life, the Person of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A minister has to stand and say this, always saying the same thing, in a sense, because he has nothing else to preach, if he preaches for eternity, nothing else to preach. Well now that is a great point, the Person of Christ, the very immediate, only begotten Son of God incarnate. The Person of the Son of God, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily".(Colossians 2 verse 9). To Him the Holy Spirit was given without measure. (John 3 verse 34). He is the Father's servant, He is the new covenant, His blood is the seal of that covenant. I "give Thee for a covenant of the people."(Isaiah 42 verse 6).

He is the very substance of the New Testament, and being this, He must needs die, for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no force at all. And all this, has in it "the words of this life," "In Him was life,"(John 1 verse 4), "For with Thee is the fountain of life:"(Psalm 36 verse 9). There is no holiness, no peace, no justification, without the Son of God. If you are sinners in the New Testament sense of that word, "I am not came to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,"(Matthew 9 verse 13), if you are such sinners, then this Saviour will be your life. And your life coming from Himself, "I give unto them (my sheep) eternal life"(John 10 verse 28) will prove its power. Life is a very forceful thing, life throbbing in the heart, life rising in desire, life expressing hunger and thirst. Life thus says, I must have the Lord or die, I must be saved by Him or be lost in hell, I must be righteous in Him or have my rags throughout eternity. The whole of the Bible teaches this, that man is lost, and that Christ is a Saviour. That man is dead in trespasses and sins, but Christ gives eternal life to men, He came for this purpose. Look then, O longing souls, look to this Saviour, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."(Hebrews 12 verse 2). There is no hope for me but here, and no hope for you but here, in this Person. A wise, a well instructed minister, could go on day after day, talking about this blessed Person, in whom is all grace. You want grace, why, God gave it to Christ for you, He gave it Him. He has saved us, says Paul, " not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (1 Timothy 1 verse 9).

So you have to go to Him for it. He gives it out, He is set up on

high, He has received gifts for you, "yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." (Psalm 68 verse 18). So He has this gift to give, O, go as a beggar, you will get it. This is the word that God will have preached to His people. Grace in Christ coming where sin is, grace reigning where sin reigned, life moving where death held the soul, life rising in the power of the Holy Spirit into heaven. Men who have studied the matter, tell us that the throbbing of a heart, in twenty four hours, would throw a stone, I forget exactly how far, but would throw a stone, throw it if it weighed a hundred weight. Now if one may use that as a little illustration. If you have life in your soul, that life will rise, the weight of sin against it, and be sufficient to rise it up to heaven. It will reach the ear of God. All your complaints will go, with all your diseases, it will take, all your desires it will express it, will carry you up to heaven, your very soul.

Look then at this, is there life? then you will never be happy without God, never. This is a test I put to myself sometimes, I have said, is it possible for a person to be a Christian, and have all the sins and corruptions, and mental; wrongs that I have? My answer naturally is, No. But when God draws near, one says this, that grace would be no grace, and no use at all, if there were no sin. Grace is for sinners, grace in Christ is to save sinners. Grace is to reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, and this must go on, it does not cease as long as man lives. He has some conflict, but he has a power of life in his soul, that lifts him up to heaven, in his desires. Now I would say in the next place, speak the word of righteousness, dear friends. Hart expresses a great truth in his hymn:

Righteousness to full perfection  
Must be brought, lacking nought,  
Fearless of rejection. (Gadsby's 800 verse 7)

Now that is what Christ is, that is what the minister must stand and proclaim with all boldness. The pharisee will hate it, the self righteous professor will hate it, but poor sinners, ashamed of their rags, ashamed by their rags, filthy rags, will hear with gladness, when the Spirit of God is in the words, that there is righteousness to perfection. God is the judge of perfection, and faith believes that God's perfection is the righteousness of Christ. So we are accepted in the beloved, in this righteousness. One wrote:

Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who ought to my charge shall lay, (Gadsby's 103 verse 3)

Seek righteousness dear friends, you who are seeking God, seek

Christ's righteousness. It is a beautiful, and ample name. "This is the name wherewith ye shall be called, "The Lord our righteousness." (Jeremiah 33 verse 16). And He does not bear it alone, another bears the same name, the husband gives his name to his wife, and so Christ gives this name to His wife, the Church. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called the Lord our righteousness". O what a name to be given to one, who has to go prodigal-like, to God with filthy garments, with the shame of a miss-spent life. And he receives, in place of his badness, this goodness, in the place of his filthy garments, this perfect robe. I would like to feel what Paul felt, and say what he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."(Romans 1 verse 16). "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed."(verse 17). And it was this righteousness that Paul panted after, for the sake of which he said "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." (Philippians 3 verse 8). "And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith." (verse 9). Depend on this, heavens gate is open, to one who wears this robe. Heavens blaze awaits, those who have this righteousness, God's smile is on those who have this righteousness. The Lord approves of them, justice approves of them, so again as Hart says:

Here's an amazing change indeed !  
Justice is now for me. (Gadsby's 151 verse 8)

If you have seen God's justice in the law, you have been shaken to pieces, but then to find that this very perfection of Deity, stands on your side, guilty and weak though you are. This is life, "a word of life". Ah it will revive a man who feels dead, it will be a want, that brings him to the Lord Jesus, to be joined to Him. It brings him to be one in spirit with the Lord, to be as perfect as the Saviour in that particular, as well as in other particulars.

Dear hearers, this is the preaching, that you must be saved by, that is to say, if you have faith to mix with this gospel, you will be saved. I want it says one, I am glad you can say it, but you say I do not get it. He says "I bring near My righteousness,"(Isaiah 46 verse 13), and when He brings it near, then the little arms of your faith will open, and you will reach out to it, and embrace it. And you will bring it in, and say "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."(Isaiah 45 verse 24). Then you will stand, then you will understand a little of Daniel's feelings, when he was "touched" by one "like the appearance of a man," "And when He had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and

said, Let my Lord speak;" "(Daniel 10 verse 18 & 19).

Righteous people who are mourning their wickedness, mourning people who are mourning their death, yet they come into this experience, expressed by Solomon, "but righteousness delivereth from death", (Proverbs 10 verse 2), you cannot be holden of death. If you have this, you go free, the freedom of a righteous man is very wonderful, it is not that he has some excitement of mind, but he has a solid wonderful righteousness, that says in his conscience, no condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". (Romans 8 verse 1). This sentence in his conscience, makes him supremely happy, it does not make him a pharisee, it makes him humble, penitent, it makes him a repenting sinner. It makes him a little child, it gives him freedom from lordly self. Freedom from self-righteousness, self-strength, self-hope, and self-direction, and it says in his heart, now Christ is everything, by faith this is all I want.

Here's all a God can give;  
Here would I constantly abide,  
And every moment live.       Gadsby's 637 verse 7)

I believe some of you want this, and believing that, I believe I am warranted to say to you, you will get it. Wait on God, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain:" (Isaiah 45 verse 19). He has said this, O listen to it if you can, if your distractions will let you, "for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me," (Isaiah 49 verse 23), that waits for God. Faith apprehends something of Him, faith apprehends something of His greatness, and of His mercy. Faith says with Ezra "O Lord God of Israel, Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before Thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this."(chapter 9 verse 24). And yet faith says, Thou art righteous, and waits on God. Notice this faith, it is a waiting spirit, because it believes, it believes God. When you get this righteousness, you lie down in peace, and say, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for Thou Lord, only maketh me dwell in safety." (Psalm 4 verse 8). (or sustains me)

You will be glad to part with your own rags then, you will cast them away from you, "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;" (Isaiah 2 verse 20). You will cast everything away from you. God will be everything.

I have one more word, before I close this morning, the word of

sanctification. If somebody called you a saint, you might shake, you might say I am not a saint, I am a wicked person. If one said to you quoting the Epistle to the Hebrews (3 verse 1). "Holy Brethren", O you would be ashamed, I have been ashamed sometimes, when my friends have spoken kindly to me, and said they thought I was right. Well notwithstanding all that, a sinner is a saint, when God has quickened him. The moment a person is born again, there is in him a creation, a new creation, spotless, perfect, that is a gospel truth, but when you come to sanctification as an experience, there is a great difference between the one and the other. When you come to sanctification in experience it is one measure today, and another measure tomorrow, and sometimes there seems none at all, only sin, only son. O it is dreadful to be a sinner, I speak it by experience. Sin everywhere oozing from your pores, mental sin if not outward actual transgressions. And yet a man says, I cannot go to God like this, I am not going like this, but you must go like that, you have nothing better to go with. What then? Christ is made sanctification, and the Holy Spirit is given, and He works holy desires, He works longings for this sanctification. I would be holy, is the language. I would leave the world, I would hate myself and my life, and my doings. I would hate everything that has anything like rivalry with Christ, and have Him alone.

Now sanctification has an aim, it aims at God, just as our god aims at self and the world. This righteousness, this holiness, aims at God. O says the sinner, I would like to be with Him, I would like to be where there is no sin, and no capability of sinning. What is that desire for holiness? Things go after their own kind, if you have no holy nature, that is if you are not born again, you cannot want God. You say to Him always in your action, in your mental life "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways,"(Job 21 verse 14), but if you have life in your soul, you can understand that word in Hart's hymn:

"But I would be holy" (Gadsby's 781).

You may read tremblingly that word "holy brethren", you may read tremblingly what Peter says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1 verse 16). You say to Him in your actions, in your mental life "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways". But if you have life in your soul, you can understand that word "I would be holy". "Be ye holy for I am Holy", and you may come to self-despair, yes self-despair, that is very wholesome, though painful. Then occasionally you will find a change, a welcome change. In the place of rebellion there is submission. In the next place, instead of carnality, there is spirituality.

Then instead of self, there is Christ, before your aim of reaching

Him, at receiving Him, and having grace from Him, to make you what you would fain be, a holy brother. If I am speaking to people who want to be holy, I will speak this word of life. Christ must be your holiness, look to Him for it, pray to Him for it, He has plenty to give. In Him are hidden all the treasures of grace, all the fulness of love, all the sufficiency of the atonement, and all the perfections of righteousness. Look to Him, wait on Him, down must go yourself, and up must rise the Lord Jesus.

May the Lord bless you, and speak to your souls my friends, and preach this Lord Jesus to you, who says, "I am the life," (John 14 verse 6), the whole life, the eternal life, and may He grant that this, may be our rich experience.

Amen.