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EVENING SERMON IS NO 127

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday Morning 25 February 1934

EPHESIANS 1 vs.20/21/22/23

"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, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"

Were it not for the fact, the blessed truth, that the exaltation of Christ by His Father has intimate reference to, and shall always be influencing, His Church and people, I would not have ventured to touch so profound, so wonderful, so glorious a passage of Holy Scripture as this passage which I have been reading now for the last two or three times of our services.

This Epistle is one of the most wonderful and profound parts of Holy Scripture; it is like a sea of glass and the street of gold whose brilliance is derived from the Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, and Paul was inspired to use the most beautiful language to express the most profound doctrines in these first four chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians that you find in the whole Word of God. He had great and wonderful revelations to his own soul; then he was inspired to utter this wonderful language and so far above us for the most part that, as I said of myself personally, but for the intimate connection that there is between this Scripture and poor sinners, even the weakest of the saints, I would not have dared to attempt to touch this. I would not speak hypocritically; I am less than the

least of all saints; I am not worthy to be a minister, but if I am a minister ordained of God, and now, in my old age, with much time on my hands for reflection, though I have plenty of work, I find a good deal, when I look back, to be deeply ashamed of, much to be thankful for, and some things relating to the Church as the body of Christ I have upon my heart at times which, in earlier days, I had not.

The Apostle, in the nineteenth verse, which I ventured to speak about last Wednesday evening, tells the saints that the great power, the omnipotence of God wrought in them; which is "to us-ward who believe", which means that God in the beginning granted to these Ephesian christians the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, the new birth. The first act of God upon a dead sinner is to quicken him into eternal life. "And you hath He quickened". The same power creates faith. Faith and the new birth seem to be coeval; that the moment a sinner lives again, that is born again, he believes. "The greatness of His power to us-ward who believe"; who believe in God, who believe in the Saviour, who believe in the Holy Ghost, who believe in the world to come; in hell deserved; in heaven, a free gift. That is a wonderful thing, a very remarkable thing; a sinner to be born again. Some of you born again may be very troubled about the matter, not knowing how God did it, not being able to put your hand on the day when, or the means by which, it was accomplished in you. Not being able at all to decide for yourself, this may be a matter of trial to you. If you could, by the Holy Spirit you would do it; look back and make a comparison with days during which you had no thought of God, no belief in the immortality of your soul, ultimately your whole being; no sense of God's justice; and come to the time when, though you know not how it started with you, you began to feel, there is a God and I have sinned against Him; there is a hell and I deserve it. God is just and if He will not have mercy on me, He will be just in punishing me through eternity; when you began, even though you might not have thought it to be prayer, when you began to pray; when it was, as it were, squeezed out of your troubled heart, you said: "God be merciful to me a sinner", or Lord, is it possible that such a sinner should be forgiven? Look back, make comparison, if you can. Remember what you were; think of what you would be. Now when you are enabled to lay hold of this you may say, though I did not know - though I could not and do not, even now, realise it - that

there was omnipotence exercised in my soul when that change came, it was so; it was really so, that omnipotence did then impart to you divine life, give to you real faith, real concern, real prayer, calling on His Name.

Now I want, as enabled, to draw your attention to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The power that brought divine life to you wrought in the body, lifeless body, of Jesus in the grave, and quickened it and thus that sacred body was re-animated, raised from the dead, by the omnipotent act of His Father, the act of omnipotence of Himself - He had power to raise Himself again - and by the omnipotent act of the Spirit; the Trinity was concerned in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This means life and glory to the Church; this means that every member of His mystical body shall be raised from the dead in sin and united as a pure member without sin to the sinless Head. It means that there is to be, and there is being wrought, by the omnipotence of God, the formation of the precious body of Christ. From Abel to this day there have been added to the mystical body of Christ all purchased members of it. Abel, the first saint to go from earth to heaven; Saul of Tarsus, angry, bitter, a persecutor and a murderer of the saints, raised up into divine life - regeneration - a member of the body of Christ, now in heaven. All these spirits of just men made perfect from Abel downward, were made perfect by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Before the coming of Christ His virtue was imparted to them, and now it is still being done; some in this congregation, born again, are to be carried to heaven sooner or later - spirits of just men made perfect - to stand before the throne and await the resurrection of their purchased bodies; to be completed persons; to be for ever with the Lord. That is the effect, the necessary effect, of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we have, in the next place, to notice what God the Father did when He raised His Son from the dead and set Him down at His Own right hand in the heavenly places. Well, Christ expressed this before He ascended. When sending His disciples, apostles, into the world to preach, He said to them: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". He took possession of heaven, so to speak, for His people and His Father set Him at His right hand. No angel sits there; no angel

sits there, only the Son. The Son incarnate, the Son having completely done the work which the Father gave Him to do, sits in heavenly places, and I want to speak, as enabled, about this. Christ now is, according to the Psalmist, where the Lord speaks in the spirit of prophecy - "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Christ is Lord in the universe, King of kings and Lord of lords, and He is waiting for that complete conquest, the double conquest if I may so express it; the conquest of every rebel bought by His blood, and the conquest of every man and every devil sinning against Him.

Among the blessings of this exaltation of Christ, above every name that is named, is the blessing of His intercession. "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him". Now this comes down, if I may speak so, to the feeblest child of God who has not a word to say for himself, not an excuse to make for any misconduct, not a reason to put before God for anything in which he has failed, no reference to second causes, but a true dumbness in respect of excuses and extenuations, and an open mouth with regard to prayer. "Open thy mouth wide". Come to Me with your petitions. Come and confess all your failings and shortcomings and sinning. Come to this great and ever prevalent Intercessor. "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him". Will it do for you, poor dumb sinner? Will it do for you who have no excuses to make, who may be rightly, graciously, sitting in judgment on yourself? That self judgment - if I may say the word by the way - that self judgment is God's chastening in you. "If we would judge ourselves we are chastened of the Lord." But that self judgment brings this, brings it to you one day by the Holy Spirit, that you may go to God humbly looking to, and asking for an interest in, the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. God set Him there for that purpose. My Spirit is upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall judge when He sees the congregation. When I receive the congregation I will judge. He said; I will judge righteously. He sees a sinner, like Joshua, clothed with filthy garments, self condemned, self judged, law condemned also, and He commands that the filthy garments that covered, disgraced and condemned shall be removed and a change of raiment given. God set Him there, and I would lay stress on this for your encouragement, if so be it may be. "Sit Thou on

My right hand" said His Father to Him "until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool", and here is one who was an enemy and He has come to him. Sinner, that will meet your case; may the Holy Ghost give you to believe it. Do not mind being dumb - may I put it so - do not mind being dumb in respect of excuses, in respect of self-justification. "Sinners are high in His esteem" and dumb people are welcome for their dumbness is only in their lips; they speak in groans which they cannot utter. He has set Him as His right hand in order that He should rule. "He that ruleth over men" or in men, "must be just" and He shall be as a morning without clouds; after rain, He shines. O look at Him, if you can, as He is seated, awaiting all who come to Him. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He is there permanently awaiting all who come to Him, permanently looking for the victory that He is to obtain. He is sat at the Father's right hand to send help from the sanctuary, to send it to sinners from Himself. He is there to dispense, in the measure which please Him, the Spirit. Every man is to receive according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Christ has blessings to impart; He has gifts to give men. He ascended on high and when He did that He led captivity captive; He received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. If you have got a need, if you have in your heart a felt need, you have a warrant in the Scripture to go to Him, who has gifts to give away, and ask Him for the gift that you feel to need. The warrant is in the Scripture; there is no barrier in this blessed Word put in the way of a sinner approaching this great and glorious Intercessor, Mediator, Jesus Christ.

And when God set Him in the heavenly places He set Him above all principalities and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Above all principalities, all rule, all angels; these He has to dispense and manage and order; angels are made ministering spirits to all who shall be heirs of salvation. Who knows but what Christ may send that angel that was sent to minister to Him when He was exhausted in Gethsemane, send that same angel to one of you in trouble. Exhausted by trial, weakened by affliction of various sorts, this great Lord Jesus may send an angel to minister to you. The ministry of angels, I am not to enter into, because I do not understand it

particularly, but Scripture clearly tells us that angels are ministering spirits, flames of fire, sent forth by their Lord Jesus Christ to minister to all who shall be heirs of salvation. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him". We do not know, we cannot know perhaps particularly, what the Lord Jesus may do in this particular with regard to some here. Some are troubled; God knows we are troubled; He knows we are troubled by sin: He knows we are troubled by circumstances. He knows that as a church and congregation we are afflicted by our friends being afflicted, but He has angels to send forth to minister to us. He rules principalities and power, the power of the devil. Wicked angels, fallen angels, are servants to Christ and the church. A deceiving devil could only go and deceive Ahab by the permission of his Lord and Master. "Who will go for us?" "I will" said the devil. He did not appear to take a step until he received that power from Him who said "Go", and this control of our Head reaches poor people of God. He, the Father, set Christ above these powers. Has Christ this authority and Lordship for Himself only? No, the effect goes down to His body, to His church and people.

"And might". That, even men may have; the rulers of the darkness of this world. "And dominion". That men assume, and the devils have in their own measure, according to the Scripture. These are all under Christ and I bring this before you just to say this, that as they are under Him, they all shall be under you. Every saint has awaiting him this exaltation in his measure, of which Christ has the fulness.

"Not only in this world". Not only in your pilgrimage, your trials, your warfare, your conflict, your affliction; "Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come". This expresses the wonderful safety of a trembling child of God. It says - and when his faith can receive it, it is his comfort - it says, no harm shall come to you. It says, in the Romans: "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". All dominions, all powers, all principalities, all influences for evil, all attempts of the devil to destroy, these are under the authority, the Kingly authority of that glorious God Man, Jesus Christ, whom God set at His right hand far above all these things. If we have faith to lay hold of this truth given us by the

Spirit we shall see that, worms though we are, we are destined to have a seat on the throne of the Victor. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne". No angel, holy, keeping his first estate, shall be as near to God as the lowliest child of God on earth shall be. When all the dominating troubles that depress and distress and all the afflictions that weaken, and all the sins that darken and defile, and all the devils that tempt and seek the destruction of the tempted, when all these have had their day, and their influence over a child of God shall cease, then victory will be sung, enjoyed for ever and ever. Then a worm here shall sing victory through the blood of the Lamb. Then one who all his lifetime was subject to bondage through fear of death shall say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin" - of which Christ made an end - "and the strength of sin is the law" - the law which He magnified and made honourable. Grave? He robbed it of its victory, and it is well said by one, they are in that grave which saw no corruption, but has a great terror for a poor child of God. He shall say, O grave, I will destroy thee. All the terrors of death and the grave taken away by this blessed God, Jesus Christ.

"And hath put all things under His feet". All things that trouble the church shall be put under her feet. "And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church". O if we only believed this, were led to enter into it by faith. All things is this blessed God to the church. "Head over all things to the church which is His body" His precious body. "The fulness of Him"; the Mediatorial fulness; the sacred relationship fulness is the Church of Christ to Him. "The fulness of Him filleth all in all"; that filleth her, that filleth the world, with His omnipresence. What a state awaits the people of God; it is overwhelming if you are at all led into it by the Holy Ghost what awaits you. Here, a poor trembling soul says, what shall I do? I cannot bear this trouble patiently; it provokes me. I cannot walk in this difficult path; it stumbles me. I cannot take up the cross as I would do; I am offended with it. I cannot manage sin; it constantly is hurting and defiling me. What shall I do? And that same poor worm has set before him in the Scriptures and by the Holy Ghost this; Christ, having all things put under His feet; God, His Father, having promised Him the heathen for His inheritance, and His

enemies for His footstool. All this is to come into the church according to the measure of the gift of Christ. I have not dealt with it as I would; may the Lord bear with my shortcomings, but bless, if it can please Him, any poor word that I have uttered, and if only by drawing your attention to this sweet passage of Scripture, my talking shall not have been in vain. May the Lord command His blessing to rest on us by means of this Word.

AMEN.