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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 9th August 1925

Text: Ephesians IV verses 1, 2 and 3

"I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"

We saw this morning the source and foundation of this heavenly calling. It is good when we are led into such a thing to observe the source of what we have, and the source,

the foundation of heavenly calling is predestination. Predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, and whom He did predestinate, them He also called. Many a Calvinist may boast of his knowledge of doctrine and be destitute of the grace that flows from the doctrine. Beware of trusting in naked knowledge of the doctrine of God's word. Out of His heart decreeing good comes effectual calling by His Spirit. Eternal determination to have a people in time and throughout the ages of time. He calls whom He has eternally loved. This is the source, this is the foundation of all vital religion. This call, this vocation, is to holiness. Vital religion is not an unholy

thing. The doctrines of grace rightly received and known lead to holy practice. First inward holiness, and then an external separation from what is evil and worldly and that conformity to the world to which we are all prone. Ye are called unto holiness. Peter says that Christ bore in His own body on the tree our sins, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness. See if what you know, what you profess to know, has a good effect on your spirit, and on your life. If it has not, your profession is vain. We are called by regeneration. That is to say, regeneration is the first act of the Holy Spirit on a person whom God has predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, and that regeneration is the root and foundation in the soul of all conformity to the Lord Jesus. The beginning of likeness to Christ in a sinner is in regeneration. You will never draw that blessed image on your soul by your own hand. It will from first to last be a matter of mercy and of gracious operation by the Holy Ghost, and this evening I would as helped draw your attention to one or two particular things unto which we are called and then notice as I did this morning a little of what it is to walk worthy of the vocation in those particulars.

First of all we are called to know the Lord. Mark it, for be assured of this, whatever you may profess to know, if you are not acquainted with the Lord Jesus, you are not called. There will, sooner or later, be imparted to you, if you are quickened, some knowledge of that Person. Speaking to His Father in the 17th chapter of John, the Lord Jesus said of His disciples "Now they have known that I came

forth from Thee. Whatsoever Thou hast given Me I have given them. I have declared unto them Thy Name and will declare it, and this is life eternal that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" and says the Apostle John in his first Epistle "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us understanding that we may 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". How this knowledge comes into a person's heart, we are informed in the Gospel by Matthew. Jesus, enquiring of the notions held concerning Him of His disciples, said to them, after hearing what they had to say, "But whom say ye that I am" What do you know that others do not know" Peter answered "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", and Christ said to him that he was a blessed man in that knowledge which His Father had revealed unto him. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven", and the clear deduction from that is this, that the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, in the sense that Peter had it, that knowledge is a matter not of acquisition, but of revelation, and we are called to this, if we are the Lords. It is written in the Hebrews concerning the new covenant, that I will write my law in their minds and in their heart and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people. They shall no more say every man to his neighbour and to his brother, know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them unto the greatest and that knowledge comes later if not just at the same moment when the law is written in this "For I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more"

It therefore is a great blessing when a person can say in his own measure and manner of himself what Paul said of himself "have not I seen Jesus Christ our Lord" and so also further we may say that vital religion is not a matter of guessing, supposing, not a matter of conjecture, but a gracious, divine, knowledge given by the Holy Spirit whose office in the Covenant of Grace is to reveal Jesus Christ. "He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you," and so "He shall glorify Me". Now are we called to this? Religious we may be and ignorance of Christ is consistent with a natural religion. If we are godly that is another matter. If we are taught of God, we know the things He has taught us. They come sovereignly. Beams of heavenly light are shed on the understanding, and inflowings of spiritual life animate the soul and the instructions of the Spirit bring knowledge of Him, to know whom, with the Father who sent Him, is life eternal. It is a great thing to know Christ, but in what ways is He to be known and is known? That He is knowable the scriptures show. That people are taught the knowledge of Him the scriptures also show, but in what ways is He known? Let me mention two or three.

First, as the way to God. What has sin done for us? Shut us out of His presence. Justice drove us out of Eden. There is no way back to God by the law which we have broken. We can conceive no way back by ourselves because, being ignorant of God, how can we know a way to Him? But the Lord Jesus, having come says, I am the Way, the Way to the Father. Through Him we both have access unto the Father by one Spirit. Through His blood we gain access; through His

atonement, His very Person as the Mediator, we have access, and this runs through the whole of the experience of God's people like the scarlet thread that runs through every yard of rope made in the Royal Admiralty. You will find whenever you pray rightly you pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whenever you get access, you get access through Him. Whenever you have boldness in prayer it is through His precious blood. Whenever the Lord gives you true liberty it is in Jesus Christ. I am the Way; the Way to life, the Way to pardon, the Way to justification, the Way to sanctification, the Way from a deserved hell to a freely given heaven. The Way from pollution to holiness, from weakness to strength. He is the Way, the only Way.

Also He is known as the foundation on which to build. In eternity God laid a foundation in Zion and that foundation is a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone. Here is that solid resting place, that firm immoveable foundation on which faith builds. Here one stands who in himself has nothing but mire and mud, and corruption, but when the Spirit reveals this blessed foundation then there is felt to be a rock beneath your feet, a rock that will hold you, about which, and on which, you may have storms, from which you shall never be separated. "On this Rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

And further He is known in this way. The Spirit calls to this, namely that He is a Refuge. A Refuge in times of

trouble, when a burdened heart, when a lacerated spirit, when a grieved soul finds access into this Refuge. "They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee", they run into this Name and are safe. "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." So they are called in these particulars to own Jesus Christ.

And further, they are called to own Him as their intercessor, their only intercessor and they can afford to let the papists have all their intercessors. He and He alone can effectually open His mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. If you can put a bad case into His hands, He will take it up and bring you off well. No harm shall come to you if the Lord Jesus takes up your case and intercedes for you. Our labour is not to fight our own battles, but to get near to Him and entreat Him to undertake for us and put a word in for us when the enemy seeks to sift us as wheat. Satan hath desired to have thee to sift thee as wheat but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.

They are called to know Him as the mighty God. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, this that travelleth in the greatness of His strength", who is this? The Lord, the Lord, mighty in battle travelling in the greatness of His omnipotence. When a man by divine teaching loses his own strength, when he is not able to manage himself or overcome his enemies, is it not wonderful that he in his weakness should know the mighty God in his own nature, and to be called to put his case into those mighty hands. This God

rideth upon the heavens in His excellency. This God says He shall never be discouraged. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. We soon fail and are soon discouraged, He never. Hast thou not known, O fainting sinner, hast thou not heard, hath it not been told thee, that the Lord, the everlasting God, fainteth not, neither is weary, and added to this almightiness, is wisdom. Is not weary, nor does His understanding fail. He knows everything. Two things for instance for us, to name no more. He knows your weakness; He does not call upon you to defend yourself. He knows your weakness and then also He knows His own power. I am the Lord. Is there anything too hard for the Lord. Is there anything too hard for Him. No devil He cannot overcome, no sin He cannot subdue, no lust He is not able to slay in your heart, no difficulty He is unable to manage. "Is there anything too hard for the Lord" When faith is strengthened she looks far beyond our narrow and near horizon and sees omnipotence. We are called to this, and also we are called to sit in heavenly places in Christ. To this the saints are predestinated, as in this Epistle the Apostle pens in that magnificent way. We read "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Can these things be in God's heart and never come out of it? Can He have

thought and decreed such mercies for sinners, and never bring them into the hearts of sinners? And if these things are become an experience, and I believe they are, then who shall call us to them but that Holy Spirit who is sent to guide His people into all truth. These are the ancient things, the things of which the Apostle Paul in the Corinthians speaks thus "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." If you complain that you cannot reach them, one would say your complaint, though just, will not keep you out of them because the Spirit is commissioned to bring them to you. He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. A saint is a passive receiver of good things and he is gathered up in the wings of the Spirit's gracious teaching and borne away for a moment or two into divine things. He sees them as realities; he feels the weight of them upon his spirit, and sees the glory of them by faith and pants to experience them like one confesses

Look how we grovel here below
Fond of these trifling toys
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys

but though that be so, there is one who can give power and does give power to the faint, and does carry, as I have said, on the wings of his gracious teaching poor ignorant people, into the knowledge of divine mysteries, union with

Christ, conformity to His will, power to a faint person, an increase of might to a man who has no might. Such blessings are in Christ and they are brought to a sinner by the Holy Spirit. In these things his calling consists. God is his God. He belongs to God. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"

Now, Bunyan says in one place "Now for the practio part. We have seen a little of doctrine. We have to look now as enabled a little at the practice. We are called to virtue. The dignity of true religion is very great. It is a great thing to have God's religion in your soul. The foundation of it declares this and Peter, as I mentioned this morning, expresses it in those beautiful words According as His divine power hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises and He has called us by His glory and virtue (to His glory and virtue is in the text) but it is by His glory and virtue, and to be called by the glory of God is to be called by the Holy Spirit. To be called by the virtue of God is to be called by the effectual grace and instruction of the Spirit. Now what has the Lord called us for? If He has called us, what has He called us for? Has He called us to live as we used to live? Has He called us to continue in the world living after the course of this world according, as Paul says in the second chapter of this Epistle, according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Are we to live under the power, the dominion and rule of unbelief? Is the law of sin in us, in our members, to be a law to us? Is the world to be our guide? Are its maxims to be a rule for

us? Of course you say "No". What then. We are called to holiness.

First of all to a life of faith on the Son of God. Says the Apostle, we live by faith. Not by sight, when we live by sight; we live looking at our weakness and ignorance and frailty, and liability to fall; we look at our trials and mortifying things and so long as we look at them we are weak and grow weaker and weaker, and more and more ready to give up. Now the Lord says "Look unto Me" What a word "Look unto Me" You are not sufficient for yourself, look to Me, I am sufficient for you. Said He to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me" If you walk before your troubles you stagger. If you walk by your reason you fall. If you walk by unbelief you contradict the promises. Says Paul, Walk worthy of that God who has called you. Walk worthy of the vocation. What has come to you is heavenly, walk according to that. It is true light; walk in the light while ye have the light that ye may be children of the light. I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. The Apostle John in his first Epistle tells us this "These things little children I write unto you that ye sin not, but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." I write these things that ye sin not. That is to say the true nature and tendency of God's work in a sinner is this, to turn him from the world, to call him out of the world and out of himself and lead him into the Lord Jesus of whom we read this "I will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name

saith the Lord" Do you walk so? Let conscience answer? Do you walk by faith? Faith says

Trials may press of every sort
They may be sore, they must be short
We now believe and soon shall view
The greatest glories God can show

Is that how you walk? Grace is the rule, faith is the foot to walk by that rule. Grace points out the way, faith follows, for faith is knowledge. Faith is knowledge; faith is understanding. Where were we when God laid the foundations of the earth? He asked the question of Job and we may ask it. Where were we when God laid the foundations of the earth?.....

Then if we did not see the foundations laid how are we to believe them to have been laid by God? Well the Apostle tells us in the Hebrews how we are to believe them.

"Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Just faith. Would you be a good, an accurate scientist in respect of this world, its framing, its founding, its preservation, its ordering, then you must have faith. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed. Faith is an understanding of things which exist, of things which were made by God. Now look at it spiritually. Through faith Moses kept the Passover. He knew Christ was coming. He foresaw by faith in the teaching of the Spirit that Messiah, the promised Messiah, was coming, that He would be the Passover slain for the church and so he kept the ordained Passover not fearing the wrath of the king. Through faith Abraham had that promise put into his heart and he kept it and he went out not knowing whither he went. He sought a city of which he had firm confidence as to its existence. He sought a city far on high whose builder and maker is God. Walk by faith. This will bring a conflict, for reason is not going to die easily. Luther speaks of the beast reason, that has to be sacrificed. That is not easy. If you think him dead one day he will live the next. If you think you have a victory in one particular trouble, and can commit it to the Lord, another comes and you find reason as active as ever. Yea, it is so subtle that you cannot shut it out of things. At times it is like a gas. You may cork this chink and that

and think that you have made the floor and the whole place secure, but Oh some subtle poison will get through and so unbelief is a subtle thing, and reason is a subtle thing. We walk by faith. Reason says this cannot be. Faith says it shall be done. Reason says how can I get through. Faith says God is able to bring you through. Reason says no good can come out of this. Faith says God will bring good out of it. Abraham believed God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, from whence he received him in a figure. Thus faith gives energy to the soul sometimes.

Lord I cannot let Thee go
Except a blessing Thou bestow

Happy the man then who can walk by faith. When we are under the power of unbelief we are slaves. We stagger and reel to and fro like drunken men and are at our wits' end. When we walk by faith we are steady and sober minded and humble and tender and God is the first and the last. We believe what He says then "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord which is and which was and which is to come"

But now there is another rule for us, a rule consistent with this and always running alongside with this. Indeed they are just one rule. That is to say, we walk by love. Faith which worketh by love. Love is a beautiful thing. Natural love is very beautiful and the love of God is very beautiful. Love is a considerate thing. It considers its object. How can I make this person happy? What can I do to

help this person? Love is very considerate. Love in God took into consideration all that should be needed, every possible contingency, everything that could come into the way; every weakness, and all fear and trouble and affliction and deaths, and made ample provision for all and when this precious love is shed abroad in the heart of a sinner, or when a sinner as in the chapter preceeding the text knows the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, then one certain result is this, he loves the Lord in return.

Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I'd burn

Now at certain moments it does not seem difficult to love the Lord when He favours you, when His cross is set before you, when you perceive His righteousness to be your justification, and His power to be your support and His wisdom to be your guide. All is well and you are happy in the Lord. His service is sweet and His ways are pleasant and wisdom as it enters into your soul is pleasant to you, but when He hides Himself, when He lets a John be put into prison and does not visit John and apparently sends him no message week after week and month after month, lets him alone in prison, what then. Said Jesus Christ to the messengers sent to Him by John, tell John what things you have seen and when you have told him all you have seen, say this to him "and blessed is He whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Does not a prison offend you, does not the Lord's absence offend you, does not affliction offend you, does not a mortifying thing offend you? Happy are you if in

trouble through trouble, by means of trouble, you can stick to the Lord, justify Him in His severest dealings, in His solemn rebukes; if you can say He is right and I love Him; if like the old woman I knew at Leicester fifty years ago, if like her you can say "I love every twig of the rod He has used," then you are happy; then you walk well, walk worthy. There is a conformity here to what God has done, a conformity to the nature of things and a conformity in the measure of things. In the nature of things the conformity is this, that as He loves you now you love Him, and He is pleased with it. You cannot love Him as you would but that word is good "It is accepted according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not" if there be first a willing mind. Love is a sweet grace, tender, jealous, zealous, sweet, begotten by the love of God. Tender; you are afraid of doing what will dishonour Him. Jealous; afraid lest He should not come to you, afraid lest you should provoke Him to depart from you. It is a beautiful grace. It hangs about Him, it cleaves to Him. It looks with affectionate gazes on His blessed cross, it listens with an attentive ear to His Holy Word, it follows with humble zeal the way He has opened and would wish always to be walking by the rule He has given. Walk worthy of God. Walk worthy of that liberty he has given to you, the liberty of the sons of God. Ye are called to liberty "only" says the scripture "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" This liberty is gospel liberty which means justification, forgiveness, which means the favour of God upon your spirit. Walk according to that

liberty. Now there is one part of that liberty that is very wonderful. It is expressed in the Hebrews where the Apostle says "Having therefore brethren boldness " that is liberty, an untaxed way, an opened door not to be shut night or day. Having liberty to enter into the Holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Walk worthy of God.

Lastly now, to be separated from the world. What union can there be between a believer and an unbeliever, what concord hath light with darkness, says the Apostle to the Corinthians or rather the Lord speaks thus and in that same place He says "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing." He said again in another place Come out from among them who are your companions. Who are the companions of your heart? Go into a man's library, look at the books, their titles, and as you look at them you say well that man is of such a character. His books tell more or less distinctly his character. Who are the companions of your hearts. Are they the Lord's people? Of them can you say they are to you the excellent of the earth in whom is all your delight? Are you taught to love the brethren as the Apostle speaks in another place "Come out from among them" I should say that a man, a good man, when in a spiritual frame of mind, if he has to go to market, will be pretty much like any and all of us would be

in a shower of rain. We should get out of it as quickly as we could. See a man with a spiritual mind; he will do his business that is properly lawful. To neglect it would be wrong. A lazy man in that particular is far from being what he ought to be but a man diligent in his business with God before him, the fear of God in his heart, will certainly not remain in the world longer than is needful. Its maxims, its spirit, its language do not suit him. He is of a heavenly nature one of Christ's heavenly men, and therefore the rule for him is not the world, but the new creature. This is the rule, a new creature acceptable to God and agreeable to the saint. Walk worthy of this. Oh I hope the Lord will so enable us to walk one with another and in the world and in all our connections and relationships and business so that we may never bring justly a reproach on the name we profess. I should like that it might be as it was with Daniel. They said that they were sure to find no fault in him except it were in respect of the law of his God. There is plenty in us to turn us aside, a disposition to swerve. The old man and the unruly member, the tongue, speaking against the Lord and to use unwise words, plenty in us, but says Paul you are called with an holy calling. He says "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and walk according to that holy rule. Mind the rule my friends. Do not make yourselves your own rule. As you cannot be sufficient for yourselves, so neither can you make a rule in yourselves, for yourselves. God's word brought to you, opened and explained to you by the Holy Spirit will be a good rule for you to observe. Do not make conscience your

rule, unless that conscience be under the guidance and instruction of the Eternal Spirit. If we walk thus it will be a mercy. Salvation is of grace. Nothing can alter that, but if you want to prepare thorns for a dying pillow, if you want to have the rebukes of God, the hidings of His face, be careless about your conduct, inwardly and externally, and you will find when you do so God will notice it and resent it to your great cost. May the Lord help us to observe this exhortation, not forgetting its foundation, and give us grace narrowly to look at our ways and above all to gaze on Him.