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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 30 July 1933

GALATIANS 6 v 14

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in
the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world
is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

If you get this cross under your souls, you will lie down comfortably in a fiery trial. If you have it not, you will never be really happy, never be holy, never reach heaven. All religion outside of this is short; all religionists lacking this are poor, vain creatures. The Judaising teachers who went down to these churches in Galatia taught them that they must mix law and gospel, that gospel alone was not sufficient; they must mix the two. As if fire and water could be one; as if curse and blessing could mix; as if life and death could be married. They desired to glory in the flesh of these poor Galatian Christians by having them circumcised, and they desired this particularly that they might boast of making proselytes. God gave Paul inspiration to write the severe rebukes that this epistle contains. What a word - "I would that they were cut off that trouble you". What a sentence - "I stand in doubt of you". These Galatian Christians had had a singular manifestation of Christ. "O foolish Galatians" says Paul, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" As if he should say, did not you see Him in the Spirit crucified? That is to say, was He not made known to you in your hearts? Did not your faith receive Jesus Christ? Why then do you listen to these false teachers, having come from Jerusalem, but not with the authority of the Apostles there. They have come to injure you; listen not to them. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free."

My friends, the cross of Christ in the first place is the centre, the central truth of the everlasting gospel, the promised Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people shall be. Yes, nations shall say each to the other: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the house of

the Lord which is built upon the top of the mountains." Let us go where God is. That is, let us go to the cross. Is He your Saviour? You have legality; who has not? You have sin, you have guilt, you have depressing circumstances. You have many things in you and about you to distract your attention, but is there a centre to which, as it were, naturally the spiritual man turns and says, here would I be, here would I rest, here would I hope and live and pray and trust and praise. Any centre but this to any of you is nothing but a delusion. Sinners of mankind will never rest, either here or hereafter, except it be here, where God rests; the only centre whence radiate the blessed, beautiful beams of mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, destined to reach the uttermost parts of the earth. My friends, Christ is God's delight, the Object of angels' worship and willing obedience. But to the Church, under the light and teaching of the Spirit, He becomes All and in All. One man's business is his centre. He rises early and sits up late and eats the bread of carefulness, and he misses the mark. This centre will never move, like the Rock of Ages, immutable, and therefore the man, weak, poor, empty, unrighteous, guilty, naked, making, through grace and the Spirit's teaching, Christ the centre, the hope, the life, the comfort and the peace of his soul, is getting on toward heaven and cannot miss.

The cross was the meeting place of mercy and truth, of righteousness and peace; there they kissed each other. Would you see and admire the severe, the holy justice of God perfectly satisfied and standing on the side of repenting sinners? Behold it at the cross. Would you see God's holiness benignly smiling on polluted sinners and hope that it smiles, and will everlastingly smile on you? You must go to the cross to see that. Would you see righteousness, in all its beauty and strictness, allowing nothing that would deflect one particle of it, and yet a righteousness that is to be given to, imputed to, and put upon the most worthless, guilty sinner? You must go to the cross for that sight. Would you see mercy in all her tenderness, looking to guilty people, sinners of mankind? You must go and see that mercy standing beside smiling justice, and hear justice say, this is the vent for you, this is the way you shall flow to sinners; all, all, is here. Would you be a believer? Do you mourn unbelief, hardness of heart? Would you find that your sins

disappear occasionally, that the burden of them is removed from your conscience, and that the hardness of your heart departs in a most peculiar and singular way to yourself. The cross, my friends, will tell you all about that. That, and that alone, can answer the question - why is this? The lustre, the beauty of God, the glory of God, the blaze of justice, the beautiful rays of mercy, the blessedness of truth, without the smallest possible deflection, the cross has; illustrates, sets forth.

The cross is a guide. Yes, blind sinners, wanting, seeking the way to the city and unable to find it, either in themselves or in the letter of the gospel even, reaching, by the Spirit's guidance and grace, the cross, see the way they must go. There are no conditions of merit here, but there are conditions of method. The method of God is this, that poor, weak, convinced, troubled sinners, shall reach the cross and there be told two essential things; repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. That, for the moment, empties the sinner of pretensions, wishes to make a bad case better, and brings him, as we sometimes sing, willing to be saved by grace. Ah, I thought many years ago, nearly 70 years ago, that I was willing to be saved by grace, but it is not as easy for me today to sing that as it was then, because I know more of my nature's unreligiousness. But the cross removes all objections, stubbornness, rebellion, and brings the sinner to say, I am willing, O ardently so, to be saved by grace. No conditions, no merit, no good tempers, no pleasing frames, no religion, just this and this alone. Well, what a guidance the cross gives. It says to sinners, you want to be holy; this is the way to it. You desire to be right with God; this is the way to be right. You want to have your heart humbled and purified; this is the way to it. I wish I could exalt this blessed cross of Jesus Christ before your eyes; the glory of it, the beauty of it, the holiness of it, the justice of it, the peace of it; who can properly express what this is? But the very little some of us know enables us to understand Paul's spirit when, as if he should say, you Judaisers away; you fleshy religionists away. You who boast either in your flesh or in the flesh of another, cease your false teaching. Here, and here alone, would I abide; here and here alone would I glory, here will I boast. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord". God help you and me to put your feet and my feet on this wicked thing, religious

flesh, and help us to boast alone, as did the Apostle Paul, in the cross of Christ.

The cross speaks justification. "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His Own blood, suffered without the gate". Would you be just? Leave off trying to weave the robe for yourself. Cease from attempting to add any little thread to this perfect robe. Justification? Does it shine in you? Though it be distant from you, does it shine? Where is it? It is in Christ, made known by His blessed cross. O, my brethren, this justification fits a person for heaven. The cross speaks peace. By the blood of the cross Christ speaks peace to His people. Peace? There is some natural peace yet in the world, in families. Thank God, He has not, as yet, taken all peace from the world. How soon, in the nations of the world, the terrible war, and the world in turmoil, yea, an earthquake will be, we know not. But there is a peace that is called the peace of God; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" and it is declared that Christ made this peace by the cross. Therefore, if ever you feel this peace, it will be at this blessed place. The peace of God, that is the peace that the God of peace gives to the conscience. Conscience, that peculiar faculty of man; conscience which, when quickened and enlightened by the Spirit, is the friend of God and the sinner in whom it is. The friend of God; ah, it says in a convinced sinner, God is right; you are wrong. God is just; you are unjust. He is holy; you are polluted. If conscience be speaking thus to any here, let me advise you to listen to it. Do not trample on it; do not bid it be quiet. Listen to it. Open, if I may so express the matter, open your ears to it and as it guides you, go to God and confess your sins. It is the friend of God and it is the friend of the man whom it makes miserable. It will turn you out of all your resting places, disturb all your nests. Yea, it will keep you awake sometimes. It will talk to you; it will put you in mind of sins. God will use your memory as well as this faculty and He will unite them so as that they will talk to you. O, the hours that some of us have been kept awake by memory and conscience. O, the glory of God, as He has appeared in His justice and conscience has ratified His sentence of condemnation. I know it is painful, but I would not have missed all this experience for the world, because of that which follows - the peace of God passing all understanding. What, says the sinner, peace come to me,

peace in my conscience? O, the Lord persuades him of it. Yes, and he receives it, thanks God for it; lies down in peace and he says: I will both lay me down and sweetly sleep, for I have peace with God. Then the stones of the field and the boulders of difficulty which you meet don't offend you. "Great peace have they that love Thy law and nothing shall offend them." Yes, you have peace with providence; peace with godly people, love them, esteem them better than yourself, and all through the prevalence in your heart and conscience of this divine peace. The God of peace, brethren, fill you with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The cross is an illumination. After that ye were illuminated Well, one says, all I see is my sinfulness and my sins. If you could imagine, for a moment, Adam, convinced, naked, guilty, and have said, how came you to know this?; if you could imagine yourself thus speaking, how came you to know this? Well, the law which I have broken tells me that I am naked, that I am unjust, that I deserve hell. Is that illumination a fancy? Is your conviction fancy, an imagination? O, no, says the sinner; I know it. But the cross - where sin was punished, where justice inflicted his deepest possible wound - that cross, in such a circumstance, will illuminate your understanding in the truth of God being a just God and a Saviour. Some can remember when they saw, in the illuminating light of the Spirit, a just God, but no Saviour. Then they can remember when the two united in a mysterious manner in the salvation and comfort of their souls. A just God - O, wonderful - A just God and a Saviour. That makes it beautiful to a sinner to believe that Jesus came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. O, the sweet light; 'tis good to behold the light; sweet is the light of God. Pure light, shining in its purity in the conscience revealing God, and then revealing the same God in the heart as the sinner's Saviour; that is what the cross does. The illumination - "After" says Paul, "ye were illuminated ye endured a great fight of afflictions." The cross will teach you that the way to heaven is a way of tribulation:

Shall Simon bear the cross alone
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone
And there's a cross for me

and you will be able to take it up there. Yes, father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, house, land, all forsaken in your spirit. They, because you know real rest, they give you no true satisfaction; they are not abiding. Therefore you leave them all and come to this blessed cross in the illumination of the Spirit and say, here is my wealth.

The cross, in the next place, is a resting place. Judah was loyal and faithful to God until Shiloh came, to whom the gathering of the people is to be. "And I" says the dear Saviour, referring to His crucifixion, "if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me." You wont rest in a friend. If you try, God may take that friend from you. Every prop must, first and last, cease. Not easy. O, but the way of Christ was not easy. He went through sorrow; He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. When people came to Him they found rest. He rests in Zion; they rest in Him. There is a mutual rest, which is a mystery and a mercy, between Christ and His people; a match made between them; union brought to pass between them. And, as the devoted, trusting wife says, my trust, my heart, my rest, as a wife, is in my husband, so a child of God brought to the cross says, I put my trust in Him. I give Him my poor heart; it is poor, but I have nothing better to offer Him, and He asks nothing more of me than this: "My son give Me thine heart". And you will say, Lord here it is; it is a poor heart. I am full of treachery and evil. Take this heart; let it be for ever closed to all but Thee. I wish we were a congregation of sinners gathered to this great, majestic, glorious, merciful Jesus. Who is like Him? O, that we were enamoured of Him as was the Church of old, speaking in the Canticles: "My beloved is mine and I am His". "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me". O that He might look on this Church - I will turn aside for a moment to say this - that He might look on this Church and say of it: "A garden inclosed is My sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." "A garden inclosed" and a sign, if I may so express it, a sign set up - "Trespassers will be prosecuted". Why, there is a fountain here, and a man in the world says, I will go to that fountain, that is to say, he becomes a professor. But, O, the fountain is sealed, the garden is inclosed, the spring is shut up for the use of the Prince, the Owner. Are you shut up to the cross? Am I shut up to the cross? The garden, the spring, are sealed. Are you sealed to

Christ? Are you sealed to Him? Let conscience answer. I say, brethren, the cross is a resting place, a rest for the conscience. All the demands of God on man are found met at the cross. Therefore, man brought to the cross by the Spirit, rests there. All the love of God to the Church is in Christ; His cross expresses it. Therefore the real rest of a sinner in the love of God is here. He rests in His love. All the goodness of God to supply the needs of His people is in Christ. The Father gave grace to Him before the world began; He came, full of grace and truth. Therefore when men, real Christians, have rest, further supplies, they find the rest is at the cross of Christ. "My God shall supply all your needs", spiritual and temporal, "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

A rest in affliction. Affliction is not sent for nothing to the Lord's people. There may be two reasons for any single affliction that you may have, personal affliction, or collective in respect of the church. One is to show wrong where it is. The kind Lord Jesus walked among the churches to discover what was wrong, to point it out, to reprove for it, and then give gracious advice and commandment. See what affliction does for you, my friends. Does it talk to you? Does it tell you of any particular wrong, or of sin generally? Listen to it. The wise man will always hear the rod and who has appointed it. But also affliction is for another end. God says to His Church: "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely". When you are gadding about the world, does He hear your voice? does He see your countenance? When you are too much absorbed in lawful things, so that prayer is choked, does He hear your voice; does He see your countenance? No. Yet He says: "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice". So He says to affliction, go to that wayward child of Mine, fetch him to My throne, bring him to his knees, empty him of that thing that fills him now; cause him to come and speak to Me, to confess his sins, to seek My mercy, to listen to My mercy, and also to give his heart to Me. Listen to affliction; you will get good out of it. Though no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of

righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. He sends affliction that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Lastly, here, the cross speaks heaven. Why? Because it delighted the Father; because it glorified justice; because it united truth and mercy; because there, righteousness and peace kissed each other; because it removed sin, made an end of sin, the sin of the church; and therefore, it speaks heaven; it means heaven. O sinner, it is great to be able to sing, as we sometimes do,

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing
Which before the cross I spend

Ah, if you spend a few moments there, you will spend eternity in heaven; the cross and heaven will never be disunited, for in heaven they sing unto Him that washed them from their sins in His Own blood. Here they are edified by it; here they are nourished by it; here their comforts flow; here their peace runs like a river; here is their glory - the cross of Christ. "God forbid" - a strong assertion that he will not glory in anything else. "I determined" says he to the Corinthians, "to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified", the same things as the cross, here. A wooden cross? No! Let the papists have theirs - enough wood to build a fleet - let them have theirs. Be it given to us to glory in this blessed sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "By whom the world is crucified unto me" - if anything will empty you of the world, if anything will make you feel the world is nothing to you, it is the cross of Christ - "and I unto the world". The world wont love you; you cannot love the world, you who know what the cross is. No love is lost between the world and a Christian; No. The merchant goes to market and when he has done, because he knows God and God knows him, when he has done his business, what does he do? Go to the inn and seek worldly company? No, he says, I have finished my business, I am going home. And when you have to do with the world - you must leave the world before you can cease having to do with it - when you have done your business, then you will be, in the world, like a man in a shower of rain; you will get out of it as quickly as you can. Yes. "By whom the world is crucified unto me." A man may leave the world from a wrong motiove. He may lacerate his poor body and think he pleases God by both those actions,

but he is a deluded creature. The sinner says, the cross has drawn me; the cross, I hope, holds me up. The cross is my life and my light and my righteousness and my holiness; my happiness, my peace, my joy. So, dear friends, 'tis good to be brought to this. It was a sweet thing to me the other morning when this fell upon my heart. "God forbid that I should glory". Of course, we have nothing to glory of really. We fancy we have, but grace teaches us that we have nothing to glory of, nothing to boast in, save this cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then, with regard to the future, if this Church lives, moves, holds on in the right course, this will be it; the cross of Christ. Nothing else, nothing less. Do not try to strengthen yourselves by what is in yourselves naturally. God has weakened us solemnly, seriously weakened us. I know of no remedy for this, save God's religion and God's religion comes by the cross; no other way. He wont accommodate Himself to our weakness if, in that weakness, we say we will do this and that. Do not say, the bricks are fallen down but we will build with hewn stones. Do not say, the sycamore trees are fallen, we will plant with cedars. But if you say, here we are Lord, weak, weakened, but we look to Thee, we would hang about the cross all our days, seek to know none, to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, it will be well.

AMEN.