

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 1 August 1920

Hebrews 13 v 8

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever"

Now the searcher of hearts knows our motives, our desires in coming this evening. What you want to hear He knows. What is foremost in your desire He knows. One thing is clear in the Scriptures, that He will have His Son honoured above all else, all others. "Let" said He "all the angels of God worship Him". And a more solemn charge cannot be given to a man than that which the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy, when he charged Him before God and all the holy angels, to preach the Word, to be instant in season and out of season. And if I am sent to preach it is the greatest duty, the highest honour, the most binding obligation, that I ever can be under and have to perform - to preach the Man Christ Jesus, Almighty God incarnate, and to preach Him in His work and in the effect of His work, to preach Him in the end He had in view, when He came into this world, and the work He came to do, and the words He came to speak, and the result of all, namely, that He should present His people unto His Father. May the day never come when this congregation will fall under that solemn word - itching ears, departing from the truth, heaping to themselves teachers. For if that day comes to you, woe unto you. There is none in the heart of the Father like His Son. There is none in the Scriptures like the Lord Jesus. There is none to compare with Him. He has no equal. "To whom then will ye liken Me or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One". (Isaiah 40 v 25) May this wicked self be trampled under foot and Christ be lifted up. He lays the foundation and His hands are to carry the work on, and He will bring the headstone with shouting crying "Grace, grace unto it". Therefore may it please God to help us in our heart's desires, to seek this one Person after whom David panted, saying, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". And may it be given me to say simple words concerning this very Person of whom the text says "He is the same yesterday and today and for ever".

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This morning I spoke of His priesthood in which He is yesterday and today and for ever. He "hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

And this evening I would first of all bring Him before you in that Scripture by Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians Chapter 3 v 11). "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ". If you would build on anything, any person other than this Person you will sink beneath the weight of your own labour, which is nothing but sin, for he who builds religion and builds hope short of Jesus Christ, works indirect rebellion against Him who says "Other foundation can no man lay". And if you build on yourself you do lay another foundation. And this foundation is for ever. A building cannot continue any longer than its foundation supports it, and the building of God is an everlasting building. Therefore Christ is unchangeable, the only foundation for His children, and that in several regards. First, He is the foundation for justification. Justification is founded on the Person and work of Jesus Christ. "We conclude", says the Apostle, having pursued the argument for some time, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law". And again the Apostle says in the same Epistle that "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ". This is that wondrous, that only, that immoveable foundation of justification. You will never be justified in any other way than by the very Person of the Substitute and His vicarious work. Seek no other ground, O sinking sinner, for this is laid by God Himself. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, and he that believeth shall not make haste" to find another. A justified person stands before God without sin, stands before God righteous, straight with God's requirements. That is a solemn, that is a blessed doctrine. You think of it. A man or woman, born in sin, living in sin till the day of regeneration comes, then retaining his sinful nature, but delivered from the practice, the open practice of sin, yet often as the Apostle Paul, overcome by indwelling sin, hindered from the good he would, driven to the evil he would not; that man, that woman, stands before God without sin and is perfectly straight with the

strictest requirements of justice, perfectly able to stand in the eye of God's eternal holiness and God Himself will bring against that man no charge. "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth. It is Christ that died yea rather that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God". Now sinner, that foundation will bear you, all the weight of your soul, all the immortal interests of your being for justification. This foundation will bear you; no other. It is the same yesterday in God's eternal decree; it is the same in the gospel as it is declared first in the Scripture, then in pulpits occupied by men sent to preach, and for ever in the interests of all who are brought by faith to build on this Only Rock, Rock of Ages; a foundation for a state, a beautiful, a blessed, a glorious state of a person. How stand you my hearers with regard to this? Do you hope to be justified? Do you hope to stand in that great day absolved from sin, from all the charges of the law you broke, from the anger of that God against whom you rebelled? Do you hope that neither your open wickedness, if you lived in open wickedness, nor your hypocrisy, nor your lusts, nor your murders, nor your thefts, nor your idolatries, that none of these things shall rise up in the judgment against you. And if you hope for such a condition and state, on what is the hope founded? Does the very Person, the glorious work of the dear Redeemer Jesus Christ suit us? Then lift your head for your salvation draws near. It is a great point. Justification changes a man's state and when he knows about it, it changes his feelings. Justification sets before a man a bright prospect. It tells him that God is his Friend. It helps him to face a challenge. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died", died that awful, that wondrous, that vicarious, that blessed death that is the life of the church. "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even now at the right hand of God". Ah, it is a wondrous doctrine. Luther said the church would stand or fall as this doctrine was preached or neglected. How much it is neglected, nay, how much it is denied and derided today God only fully knows. But be it given to us to know it and hold it fast, to sing in faith :

Jesus Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are my glorious dress
Fully absolved by this I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame

With that foundation laid in your soul and your soul laid on it, you will stand for ever, for it is an everlasting foundation. Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever as a foundation for all hopes, all good hope through grace. Hope for safe and honourable passage through the stormy sea of our disturbed and troubled mortality. Hope of a good finish, hope of dying an honourable death. O what a good thing it is to have a good hope. A good hope. Many hopes are like the writing in the sand, they are soon washed away. Many hopes are built on the creature's efforts. The hopes of a new world are doomed. But the hope of a sinner that God will see him well through, bring him honourably to his grave, that God will stand by him in his conflicts, grant him the convoy of His love, the support of His power, the guidance of His wisdom, the enrichment of His Spirit, the enlargement of his understanding, the subjection of his will, the enchaining of his affections and the purifying of his conscience from time to time; a hope of this, built on Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit, revealed in the heart made ready for Him by a painful experience of the contrary of all that is hoped for, O what a blessed hope it is. Well, may the Spirit say "everlasting consolation and good hope" (2 Thessalonians 2 v 16), for though there be much trouble and many interruptions to the consolation, yet it, itself, abides. It is in Christ and will come out in sweet streams from time to time. You build too low if you build beneath the skies. If you build in any tree in the whole forest of this world, you build on what Luther said was doomed to the fire. "Build" said he "on no tree, for the whole forest is sold to the fire". But if you build on Jesus Christ, build a hope that God will come to you from time to time and bless you; a hope that He will never leave you nor forsake you; a hope that sin shall not have dominion over you, that prayer laid up in heaven will have great returns in your own experience; a hope that His favour will shine on you as the sun, that you will dip your foot in oil again and again, that you will be able to lift up your face to God and be blessed to look into the glass wherein is seen the glory of the Lord, and by the sight get changed into the very image of it from glory to glory; I say if you build a hope of all this on the Lord Jesus, what shall shake you? How can disappointment come to you? Raise your expectations high, hope all that heaven has good, for what the blood of Christ has bought, invaluable blood. Christ is the same always for this. He knows no change. Storms shake us, but they

touch not the Rock. Winds beat on the house and the rains come and vehement waves, angry waves, beat too, but the house is not shaken, for it is founded upon a Rock. Blessed Rock, blessed Christ, always the same.

He is the sinner's hope for sanctification. If you expect to mend yourself, to improve your nature, if you think to get better than your expectations will prove to be a vanity and a lie to you. The mind can be cultured, but sin cannot be improved. What are we but sin in the fall, born in it. In the warp and woof it is. And how can you mend that case? But if you stand in Him of whom Paul writes to the Corinthians "Made of God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption", then the case is good. Disappointment you often will feel at your falling and failing; falling and failing seen perhaps by no mortal eye and felt by you alone as before God, but the mortification won't touch Jesus Christ. It affects you, but it cannot touch Him. It lessens your peace; it does not lessen His holiness which He has.

That we're unholy needs no proof
We sorely feel the fall
But Christ has holiness enough
To sanctify us all

You pant for the holiness; bless God for the panting. You cannot attain to it; praise Him, He will give it. He will put it within. He will breathe a holy feeling, He will create holy desires, He will maintain a holy pursuit. O but what is a holy pursuit? I fail always one says, and cannot do the good I would. He was in a holy pursuit who said "My soul followeth hard after Thee". Follow on sinner. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." O it is a great thing to hope for sanctification in Him who is the sanctification of His people, and He works it in them and their hope is for this. "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth". And when He speaks a Word, His own gracious Word, it produces the affections that a sinner longs for, the repentance he likes to feel, the holy contrition that fills him sometimes and the separation from evil, and the separation, if I may so speak, from himself. The Lord works all this. Great self and mean self and poor self and murderous self and envious self and

most vile self and covetous self. From all self of this sort God weans His children and brings them to cleave to Him who has all grace and has promised grace in this - "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace." And what a mercy it is for us that our failings and changing do not affect the grace of Christ, do not diminish it. Bless God for it. It wont encourage sin; never will it have that effect. Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and for ever as the foundation of all hopes of sanctification.

And the same, as a foundation of hope that God will love us to the end and bring us honourably through. Why dear friends, what a stretch apparently love gets in some cases. And can the mother forget her child? Yes, she may forget, yet I will remember thee, He says. And we have some striking examples of this in the Scripture. Let me mention one or two. You take Ephraim, wayward, idolatrous Ephraim, joined to his idols, spoken against by the Lord, chastised by the Lord, still going on frowardly in his way. Will the Lord cure him, or will He cast him off? That He can cure him there is no doubt. Will He? Now listen; says God - "Is Ephraim My dear son, is he a pleasant child, for since I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." Does it fit you? Have you been chastened? Are you being chastened? Are you wayward? Is there in you a spirit bent on mischief, bent to backsliding? Are you your own plague and your own greatest trouble? And do you again and again find yourself wandering from the Lord and even when you are corrected, thinking you do well to be angry? O see what love is. O look at the goodness of God here. "Is he my dear son?" I took him in, I adopted him into My family, I made him Mine, and, although possessing such a nature as he does - he wanders, he backslides, he provokes Me - still he is My dear son and I remember him. I remember his kindness to Me, I remember when he forsook all for Me; when he went into the wilderness for Me, a land not seen; that he ventured on, hungry and thirsty and lack of every good, for Me. I remember him. I forget not his work of faith nor his labour of love nor his patience of hope. I remember all and therefore I will have mercy on him. He is My son and I am his Father and I am full of compassion. And now, as far as the east is from the west. so far will I remove his transgressions from him. Like as a father pitieth his children, so shall I pity Ephraim. This is written for

our learning my friends, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. It is not a mere history, it is not confined to the old dispensation under which God spake. It is a word of grace, long grace, long mercy, long suffering of love, of tenderness, of fatherly goodness, and may the Lord give it to those to whom it is a fitting word. You take the case of Peter, a solemn case. He goes so far as to deny the Lord Jesus and all knowledge of Him, but Christ turns with double love and makes Peter's eye a sluice, his head a fountain of waters, and he went out and wept bitterly. Sin brings a bitterness and a pain and a shame and a grief, but God brings converting mercy. "When thou art converted". God converted me and blessed be His Name, He has converted some of us again and again. Christ is all here. Christ is all here.

He is the same yesterday and today and for ever in respect of the glory that He is to be to His people, that He has to give to them. "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given to them". Think of this. It is difficult for some of us who realise the shame of our sins and of our sinfulness, the unspeakable corruption of our nature, difficult to believe that the glory of the spotless Lord Jesus can ever be conveyed to us and cover us, but it is to be so. "And the glory which Thou gavest Me" as their Head, their Lord, their Saviour, their Husband, "I have given them". He communicated it in the regeneration of their souls to begin with. He communicated it in their justification and in their sanctification and in the visits of His love; in the words by which He instructed them. In all these things He conveyed to them a measure of His glory. But not to us, some may say. But if He has done the same work in you that He did to His first disciples, He has conveyed to you a measure of His glory. You cannot have the Word of Christ in you and have no glory of Christ given to you. You cannot have the presence of Christ and be without the glory of Christ. You cannot have a part in the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the Head, and not have the glory thereof. But this is yet to be full. It is not full here; the consummation is to come. And I think one may say two words about this consummation. The first is that in this epistle, where Christ says, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me". I have left none behind, O Father, I am here with them all. O the glory of this own of Christ, presented by Him to His Father. Spotless, innocent, pure, even as Christ is, so are these

His brethren. He is not ashamed of them. They here are ashamed of themselves often. They here wonder often how it will be with them in the end. Here they sink under fear, fear produced by sin. They sink in gloom sometimes. They sink in dark anticipation because of their afflictions. But O, while they are all ashamed of themselves, He is not ashamed of them. He visits them; He says "Fear not". He comforts them with His presence; He lets down into their hearts His love. He drops into their consciences His forgiveness and covers them with His righteousness. He is not ashamed of them. Only they do not exhibit this to the world. They get these mercies in their closets, in the field. They get them when they are in His society. "Come, My beloved let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages...." "..... there will I give thee my loves". (S of S 7 v 11) "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness" (Hosea 2 v 14) His voice is not heard in the street when He proclaims pardon. It is not heard in the street when He whispers "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". It is not heard in the street when He says "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass". It is done quietly in secret, and it is, as Dr Goodwin says, "Jesus Christ is most glorified in secret". O but that does not comport with the religion of the day. We must exhibit it. No, except to the eye of God. It will have a savour of a sweet smell to the Lord's children when they commune one with another. But all this secret religion has a glory in it. "She", the Church, "is all glorious within". Her clothing is of wrought gold and she is owned by her God, owned in secret, owned by the Spirit's witness and testimony. She is owned of God and then shall be owned there. Behold I and the children whom God hath given Me. And the glory she used to see here betimes in a glass darkly, and which as she gazed on it, put its own beautiful image upon her, now is fully put upon her.

And the second Scripture I would mention in this connection is this in the Revelation. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of them shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revelation 7 v 17). That is the glory my friends. There the harpers will harp and sing the new song, and there the Lamb in the midst will lead them and feed them and delight them and ever refresh them from living fountains of waters. No more tears. And what are these living

fountains? What is this bread? I think this is intended; a wondrous emanation of glory from the eternal God will always glad their eyes, always fill their souls with delight and bliss. They are creatures, hence they are fed. They must be fed being creatures. Creatureship is an honour; creatureship will abide. In heaven we shall be creatures. In heaven we shall be dependent. We shall never lose creatureship. Bless God, we hope some of us to lose sinnership - O what a happy loss - but to retain creatureship and to be entertained by the Trinity. To be led by the Lamb, to be fed by Him, to gaze on His glories, to be ever refreshed from living fountains of waters of life, of love, of beauty; more and more knowing that blessed God who has redeemed us and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. That is, as I judge, the glory that Christ gives to His ransomed people, and if they are there for ever, He is. They are there because He is there and they abide because He is ever the same, and they ever live because He is their eternal life, and they are ever glorified because He is ever present as being their glory. And so my dear friends, we have one object, one Person, one blessed ground of hope. Hope all that heaven has good, poor sinner. Think of this, what the blood of Christ has brought to you. Think of the purity of conscience and the sanctification of the soul and the removal of all sin and disability, and the giving of a capacity, of a spiritual capacity to look on and be delighted with the God of all grace as He shows Himself. Says Paul to Timothy, I charge you to preach nothing else. I charge you before God and the holy angels never mention another subject in respect of justification. Maintain Jesus Christ to be the only righteousness of His people. I charge you never to speak of another fountain of merit, only this one open for sin and uncleanness. Beat down and trample under foot as a minister, all human pretensions to share the glory of Christ in salvation work. Trample under foot and contemn utterly everything belonging to a poor sinner when salvation is in question. I charge you. May God help me to observe that so solemn charge, and may, while I live, this one subject be more and more lively in my own soul, and my lips be touched with a live coal from the altar, that I may speak the things of Jesus Christ in a small measure. I do not wonder at Paul's determination to know no-one and no subject, nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Who else can do us good? What other ground and foundation can bear the weight of an immortal soul? Who

can bear up the hopes of a sinner for eternity, but Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages?

Now my dear friends, I have put this before you. I would fain be clear of your blood and tell you this, that if you are to go to heaven, you must be built on this Man Christ Jesus. If ever you are to get to God, you must get to God through Him and if ever you are to stand as justified persons, as sanctified persons, you must stand so in Him; in His righteousness, in His sanctification. And if ever you are to see the glory of God and receive it and be clothed in it, be like it, take on you its own image by viewing it, and if ever you are to be satisfied with God and be refreshed perpetually in heaven from living fountains of waters, you must know this Person who is unchangeable in His Person, unchangeable in His priestly office, unchangeable in His great power, and great love and great goodness. And so, knowing Him, you will come to be where all His people are, but lacking the knowledge of Him, who can express the terribleness of the lack, who can express the fearfulness of it. If you have Luther on the Galatians look at the 50 or so inconveniences that he sets forth there of being out of Christ, being ignorant of Christ. It is very solemn, very solemn to be ignorant, to be destitute of that Man, that God Man the Lord Jesus. The Lord look upon us in His great love and great mercy and save us continually, convert us continually, be with us continually, and bring us well to our graves and receive us to Himself at last.

AMEN.