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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS
Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 12 April 1925

JOHN 11 v 25

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection
and the life: he that believeth in Me,
though he were dead, yet shall he live."

The first death recorded in holy Scripture is that which took place in Eden when Adam fell and that word of divine threatening took place in him. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die". And the imputation of that sin and the consequences of it, that death, we all have. It belongs to all of us; we are dead in trespasses and sins. That death defaced the image of God in which we were created and made; man was no longer upright. The becoming relationship between God as Creator and His creature was broken. We were left in sin with no remedy prescribed by, or known to, the law, no remedy possible to the law. The law cannot justify a sinner. This death of the soul is followed by the death of the body, so that we must needs die and one of the earliest chapters in the Bible ends in every verse, as you know, at least at the end of each life mentioned, "and he died". That will be said of us ere long "and he died", "and she died". The only remedy for this double death is in the text - "I am the resurrection and the life". Plenty of religion you may have without this life, this resurrection, but this, and this alone, can deliver all who receive it from death, the death of the soul. That becomes true in the new birth - "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". And it will become true in respect of the body on the great morning of the resurrection when the trumpet of God shall sound. So this blessed truth uttered by the Lord Jesus demands - may it receive from us - all believing attention. "I am the resurrection and the life." The resurrection supposes a death; it supposes the person buried. It supposes that this person dead and buried is just absolutely held, without any power to move, to raise himself. And there comes one, external to him, who has in Himself the requisite of resurrection, namely life, and all that is necessary for this dead person is for the life to convey into him His own life, and

thus blessed with the new birth a person becomes a living soul and is animated with a life contrary to his sinful life; with a life which rises in its own nature to its source. A life, being spiritual, that has a spiritual appetite and a spiritual end, even God that has conveyed to him that blessed life. Jesus Christ thus becomes the Alpha and the Omega of religion in every one in whom He is this resurrection, this life. "I am Alpha and Omega". And when all the external trappings of religion are removed, this life, independent of them and different from them, will continue to animate the person in whom it is. Blessed is that sinner then who receives this life from Him who is the fountain of it, the fullness of it. The dead soul knows nothing. "The dead know not anything"; this is Christ's word. The soul dead in trespasses and sins knows nothing of God, and therefore nothing of sin, nothing of self. All true knowledge of God, and therefore of that which is contrary to God, comes from the Lord Jesus. Probably a religion that so, if one may use the word, so ruthlessly cuts away flesh and blood, will know nothing of creature wisdom or goodness or power, will appear to be a very hard and harsh religion even to some of you; I hope not, but it may be so. Is nature nothing to be accounted of? Is that of which you are capable not to be brought into the reckoning? No. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". You can make nothing better of it, nothing else. You cannot transmute it into spirit. The things are distinct; they are different, absolutely different. O but to be a partaker of the Spirit of life in Christ, this is wonderful mercy, and when a person receives this life, this divine life and resurrection from the Lord Jesus, there is at once some effect visible, not to the person known; probably unknown to him who is the subject of it as to its origin, as to what has happened to him, still there is some visible result. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" but where it is, the effects of it are observable; they are seen. As when divine life enters the soul, there is some sense of ruin, some sense of being contrary to God and goodness, some sense of being under condemnation, and though the person may know nothing about law terms or experimental terms, the things themselves are there, and one thing is, there is a sense of being wrong; a belief in God, a belief in sin, a belief in hell, and that belief is very very painful. It brings the subject of it into a sense of ruin which grows until it becomes utter, and then the sinner finds that he seeks, yes he seeks necessarily,

voluntarily, he seeks God, and by the daily communication, secret, unfelt perhaps as to its blessed source and nature, communication of divine life, the soul is animated with fervent desires which are indeed prayers. But the sense of being dead, of being buried, is very painful. Dead in the law, buried by the law. "Ye are dead through the law" Paul says, and this is a very painful thing. And the subject of this painful experience cannot see how he can be delivered from it, how he can get out of his condition, change his state, of an unjust person becoming just; of a polluted sinner becoming holy. How such changes, so needful, so desired, can take place, he knows not. Everything is wrong in him; everything about him appears to be wrong. Providence may appear to militate against him; his position may seem to militate against him, and all his feelings are contrary to what he would be and to what he would have. And here comes that condition which is typified by the condition of the body of Lazarus in the grave, corrupting, and the person finds himself a corrupting, a corrupt thing. Nothing good, nothing holy, nothing right in him. What is he to do? I say again, he cannot change his condition, and he feels it; he is helpless. The Scriptures are against him as he realises this and that portion; the Scriptures seem to bend themselves against him like so many swords ready to pierce and cut him off. He is condemned on every side, and in all ways. He is just now in his feelings at the mercy of God. But will God have mercy on Him? He thinks not, he fears not, he trembles at the word of God. He lies in that helplessness in which his conscience, sooner or later, comes to justify God. Take it as a very great point in true religion that an enlightened conscience comes, sooner or later, to entirely justify God in his condition, present condition, and if eternal ruin comes, even in that. Well, when this is felt, when this is experienced, the sinner is very tossed about. If a little hope comes then he looks upward. When that little hope is dashed then he feels lost. If any truth concerning the nature of God beams upon him, then he trembles. If any thought of heaven comes, then he almost can hope. If he sees by faith a deserved hell, then he fears he may soon be cast into it. If he looks into his nature according to Scripture, then he says, I am undone; woe is me. If he sees or hears of the Saviour at a distance, then his heart seems a little moved and inspired with hope, but he is tossed about; his state is dreadful to him. He cannot change it; what shall he do? What could Lazarus do? What shall this

sinner do? He is a living soul though he feels dead. What shall he do? He cannot help himself. Then comes this - "I am the resurrection and the life" and this, spoken home, brought by the Eternal Spirit within, has an immediate effect which, let the Lord enable us just a little to look at. Christ said with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth". The change was effected, it was done. He spake and it was done. Omnipotence shines, is felt, the effect is visible. Omnipotence speaks to death and death flies. The sinner's state is changed; he feels a change; he knows there is a change; he realises the sweetness of the change. It is new life that flows into every faculty of his soul. God has spoken; the sinner hears, feels, sees, realises. "I will meet with thee". God has met with this sinner and the sinner now meets with Him and these two are friends henceforth and forever. Notwithstanding any change and all the change that may come in the feeling, in the experience, these two, the living Saviour and a now living sinner, these two are friends. They are united for ever and ever. Spiritually, this life consists of the communication of something of Christ to the sinner. "I am the life", and this is communicated. And just as when our life is vigorous and we feel, as it were, the blood cruising through our veins, and there is energy, so when this new life comes into the soul it affects every faculty of it. It affects the conscience. If God speaks to your conscience you will understand what I mean. Peace, perfect peace, this comes from Him who says - "I am the resurrection and the life". It brings a sinner out of that state of condemnation in which he was lying and grieving. It brings him completely up for the moment and he understands what it is to have justification in his conscience. Conscience, that wonderful faculty in us that makes us miserable as it accuses us, and never excuses us. Conscience that makes us happy when the blood of Christ is sprinkled and there is no guilt there. There is a resurrection; the sinner comes out of that state which was as a grave to him, in which he was helpless and now the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has bidden him come forth. "Doth no man condemn thee?" Neither do I. No condemnation. Justification becomes a sweet state, a very blessed experience. It becomes the sinner's standing, his ground, his light, his peace. His apprehension of God is now pleasant to Him; he perceives that justice divine stands on his side whereas before it was His enemy. Christ is this. "Who of God is made unto us righteousness". Righteousness to full perfection. Righteousness

not wrought out by the sinner but given to him and received by his faith, and thus he is enabled to stand before the Lord. What a change, is it not? There, in the grave, condemned; now on good ground standing and with open face he looks to his Lord; with open face he beholds the glory of the Lord as in a glass. He looks to His Saviour and he says in his heart - "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". He is righteous; Jesus is his righteousness, and now he perceives it. He has come out of his grave, out of his bad, condemned and evil condition. I am this, says the Saviour, I am this. This life that the Lord Jesus communicates in the conscience by justification delivers a sinner from death. It affects his will. This life affects his will. That was dead, as it were, in its stubbornness, in its judgement, in its waywardness. The rashness of the horse and the stubbornness of the mule are removed from the will at this time and now the sinner is docile. What wilt Thou have me to do, Lord is his feeling and his request. This sweet gospel docility can only be understood by those who have experienced it. It is very sweet to know no will but God's. And though that holy, that divine will says, leave the world, leave yourself, hate your own life, hate your father and your mother and your husband and your wife, your house and your land, there is nothing harsh in that divine will as it is conveyed, communicated by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to a sinner; nothing harsh in it. The sinner says in his honest prayer

Each idol tread beneath Thy feet
And to Thyself the conquest get

This is one of the best blessings the gospel gives to a sinner, to take his will - not destroy it; a will-less creature, a will-less human being, we cannot properly receive - but this will, this My Lord Will be Will, is taken and handled so graciously, so effectually, as that it is a new thing, a living will in unison with the divine will, and what God wills, this sinner now wills; he is straight with the will of God. I wish that were my daily experience. It is one of the most beautiful things you can experience when, realising in some measure what the will of God is, that you are to leave the world that lieth in wickedness, and the things of it which pass away, when I say, realising that, you are brought to lie straight with that will, and

have no other will working in you to the contrary. Well, it can only come from Him who says - "I am the resurrection and the life".

It affects the affections, the heart where the affections are; the heart, as it were, the seat of our affections. It affects the affections. And now that searching, beautiful, blessed chapter the 8 Romans is entered into in the right way. That sinner who is made free by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ minds the things of the Spirit. He does not whip himself to look into the Bible; his conscience does not lash him and, as it were, hurry him against himself to the throne of grace. He minds the things of the Spirit; they are his element, and happy is he all the day long when he finds these things to be his element, the things of the Spirit. This resurrection, this life within, will affect the person in whom it is in this way. Can we, do we, in our experience in any measure lie straight with this? It is a new life and, as it were, the person in whom it is is a new being; walks, lives, breathes in a new atmosphere, has another object before him, another end before him. I am this. Take it in this way, that God is altogether different to him from what he was. God is different, I have lived a good while in the Church of God and I hope the life of God has animated me for many years, but in these last days of my pilgrimage I find one thing - it is a kind of change - though from the beginning God made Himself great to me, yet in these last days He is greater than ever, and to be right with Him, to have His approval, to enter into - as far as a creature may enter, in this life, into - the nature of God, to enter into the revelation that He has made of Himself as the Eternal God in the Trinity of Persons, in the manifestation of grace in and by each Person in the Trinity, this is what now, in my life, my mind, I most of all desire. Think for a moment about it. Have you an end? If you are a natural person only you have an end. What is that? Self in some form. Have you an end? If you are a spiritual person you have an end and who is that end? God as He manifests Himself; God in Christ; the Trinity there. "He that hath seen Me" said the Saviour "hath seen the Father also". And the Spirit in Christ without measure, flowing from Him into His people's hearts, He reveals this God. No knowing God rightly without this new life. No entering into the mystery of godliness in the Person of Christ without this new life; that important word in the Corinthians when the Apostle protests that he

determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and he tells us what this is, that it is the mystery of God, the hidden mystery; that it is the wisdom of God in a mystery; that he speaks this wisdom of God among them that are perfect, or matured; that all the wisdom and the treasures of knowledge are in this Person, the Person of Jesus Christ. Now then, if we enter into this, it must be by being made spiritual people, heavenly minded people. To enter into this is to enter into the fulfilment in a measure in your own case of that Scripture where Christ, promising the Holy Ghost said, "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". Show what? His Person. Show His grace and His love and His blood, and His righteousness; show all to you. And it is in this way that a sinner becomes a part of the body of Christ in his experience; bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, and a member of His body in particular. How wonderful it is for one to enter into the Lord Jesus in an experimental way. We see the doctrine of Christ and of the union of the Church with Him in the Scripture, but O to feel it in your heart in some measure; to feel it overcoming the corruption of your nature; to perceive it in you working mightily and attracting you and drawing you to God. This is that which every child of God, more or less, is brought to enter into, and this explains the passage - "I am the resurrection and the life". It was as if Lazarus lived a new life, yet it was himself, only himself. He was just brought up out of the grave, from being a dead man to, now again, a living man. And so, when the Lord Jesus speaks His own new life within, the sinner is, as it were, only part of that blessed One. And this life is brought out by the Apostle Paul in the Romans where he speaks of Christ having died unto sin once but now living unto God. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is a new life, a wonderful life, and the more of it there is the more a sinner is separated from himself, and separated from the world. It gives him a good judgement of things. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

Now this resurrection, to speak of it in another way, will bring God's people out of their various evil places and conditions in experience, as when for a time they become somewhat hardened through the deceitfulness of sin and get distant from their Lord, their end,

their great Object. There is only One can bring them out of such a grave. O My people, I will open your graves. O My people I will bring you out of your graves. This is the word of God. Every sweet reviving, every upstanding, and coming away from an evil state is by this resurrection and life. What a solemn thing it is to be made distant and dark and in any measure hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and what an amazing grace is that that delivers a person out of that state, and that is the explanation, the reason of it, that the resurrection and the life comes again into the soul, again animating it.

Also when in affliction you are as a person buried, got distant from God; My Lord Will be Will asserting himself, and a warped judgement misjudging and misbelieving God and His truth; when such a case, so sad, is known, this is the remedy - "I am the resurrection and the life". No other way. It is a painful experience, to experience the contrary, but a sweet, wonderful thing to experience this blessed resurrection; like a new conversion; like a fresh start given you by Him who gave you the first start and the first resurrection. And when you get this you know it; there is something done, something effected in you, wrought by the blessed power of the Lord Jesus.

"And he that believeth in Me though he were dead" to all appearances - though he were dead in his feelings, though he were dead in many respects - "yet shall he live". Nothing can keep him, no death can hold him in his cold embrace, nor cover him with his corruption; he shall live. This believing, this believing is an exclusive thing. It will tell you that nothing of an external kind can do you good, It will protest that none but Jesus can do you good. It will go to Him. His language will be "Lord save or I perish." "Though he were dead" in many respects, in his feelings and his judgement, his misjudgement, though he were in this evil state, "yet shall he live." Faith hangs about Christ, goes straight to Him, pleads what He is and what He has done; asks in His Name, of the Father, things that are needed, that are felt to be needed. This blessed faith is the faith of God's operation; He works it and the Holy Spirit directs it. When we are uncertain about the way, how glad we are if we come to a signpost that directs us and tells us which way

to go. When we are perplexed and, as it were, dead, how grateful is the operation of the Holy Spirit who comes and turns faith's eye to the Lord; turns faith's eye to Him who here speaks - "I am the resurrection and the life." And that inspires hope, that tells a sinner that though he be as dead there is One who can and will bestow new life upon him. Hart expresses it

He, to the feeble and the faint,
His mighty aid makes known,
And when their languid life is spent
Supplies it with His Own

Well, this exalts the Lord. One would believe that for the rest of his days, from time to time, as Lazarus felt health and the strength of a man, his mind would run to the Saviour who had given him new life. How grateful he would be; how, in the bosom of his family, with his sisters, he would now and again expatiate upon this great wonder. Here I was dead; I was in a grave; I had corrupted and He came and He conveyed life to me again and brought health to my body and gave me liberty. Now when a child of God has had resurrection on resurrection at times his mind will hover about this wonder. Who gave me this life? Who wrought in me this peace? Who spoke this power to my soul? Who delivered me out of that trouble? Who brought me forth? May I praise Him? Yes, all the praise belongs to Him. "He that believeth in Me" - in My Person, in My work, in My power, in My goodness - "though he were dead". In many respects he is a living soul, and his living faith goes out to a living Saviour and brings the sweet effect, the blessed effect that was so desired. My friends, if I rightly apprehend the teaching of God's Word, and have somewhat of that in my soul, I have told you the truth. That religion that is saving, religion that will stand the shake of temptation, and the chill of death, religion that will bring you to God here and land you with Him in Eternity, is the religion that comes from a speaking, working, communicating Christ. Nothing else will do; nothing. Well, this will shut us up to God, and if we rightly apprehend Him it will bring us before Him lost and ruined; undone and always being undone and undoing ourselves. It will bring us to Him in affliction, in sorrow. Under sin's burden and perplexity and temptation this religion will bring us - that is to say this faith will bring us - to the Lord. "Lord

save or I perish". Help me, deliver me. Have we got it? Has the Holy Ghost conveyed this religion to our souls? A living Christ, has He conveyed His life to us. If He has He will take care of it. Jesus loved Lazarus. He let him die which seems unkind, negligent. He abode two days in the same place where He was, where intelligence of Lazarus's sickness came to Him; He abode there two days; He let Lazarus die. He may not come to you when you cry to Him at the first. He may abide away from you in your affliction, your sorrow, and some peculiar sin and temptation. He may say, he is dead; "Lazarus is dead". He may say "I am glad for your sakes' that I was not there" to prevent death. Glad? Yes, for now was room for a greater display of what He was and what He could do. Room for His Word, room for His life. The unbelieving Jews said - Could not this Man who opened the eyes of the blind have prevented the death of Lazarus? He could have, but No, He would glorify Himself by bringing a dead Lazarus to life again. And so the cases that you may be in, the unbelief that you may have in your heart, may say again and again He could have prevented it if He would, and He may say, I am glad I was not near you then, glad I kept away, that you might believe and see the glory of God. "I am the resurrection and the life". May He be this to us.

AMEN.