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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 17 June, 1931

JOHN 16 v 33

"These things I have spoken unto you, that
in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall
have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have
overcome the world"

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, the promise made by Him of the Holy Ghost, giving to the church the changes that should be experienced by the people of God, the promise of being heard by the Father when they shall pray, the promise that He Himself will pray the Father - and yet such is the Father's love to them that He needs not to pray - that He tells them plainly. He had spoken to them in a parable before but now He tells them plainly that He came forth from the Father, that He was returning to the Father. These are the things which He had spoken to them in this chapter and the preceding chapters which appear to be His last sermon, His last instruction, just before His crucifixion. These are the things which He says I have spoken unto you. And the intention of these speakings, these divine truths is that these disciples and all the people who follow them, you who are here who know and fear God down to the latest convert, the latest elect vessel born again in the world, might have peace, and that peace in Himself, therefore solid, abiding. Peace in providence is pleasant, but very transient. Peace, with good health, is very sweet, but may soon pass away from us. Peace with friends, peace in the church, so desirable, is very, very pleasant, a kind gift of God, but even that may be broken when the Lord is not powerfully working with men by the Holy Ghost, and in a church there is plenty of human nature to give offence, plenty of human nature in you and in me in the church of God here to give and take offence if the Lord be not with us. Do not think you are safe. If God is away from you as to His powerful working what is there to keep this church? Nothing at all. But He says "In Me", your Saviour, your Mediator, your Advocate with the Father, "in Me", in whom is all fulness, all grace, "in Me ye

might have peace". Now this may be a searching question to us. Have we peace in Him?

Dost mind the place, the spot of land
Where Jesus did thee meet

Did He ever speak a word of peace to you? O it is a great thing to have peace with God and peace in Him. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The things that Christ speaks are of infinite worth, of infinite depth. We can never know them fully. Eternity will not be too long to open and discover to us the things of Christ and the things that He has said. No wonder that the Holy Ghost calls the gospel the glorious gospel of God, the everlasting gospel, the gospel of God's grace, for such is the gospel it will never wear out. It will never be exhausted. Any part, so to speak, of the gospel that we get from the Lord is so full we can never exhaust it, never enter into it very fully. What a mercy if Christ speaks things to us. The things which are written here are "written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope". They were not written just for the church of God then but for the church of God to the end of the world. When men talk about the second coming of Christ and about its being very near, quoting certain Scriptures in the Epistles and saying that the Word then meant that it was very very near, they forget entirely, if ever they remembered or knew, that the Word of God is for all time for the Church and just like Himself, the same yesterday, today and for ever.

"These things". The gospel, imputed righteousness, free and full forgiveness, the sanctification of the Spirit, the justification of the ungodly by the righteousness of Christ and the presence of Christ, and the presence and the teaching of the Holy Ghost; these are the things which the Lord Jesus spoke and the Spirit caused them to be written. They were written by inspiration so that there is no mistake, no error. The infallible, inerrant Scripture which cannot be broken. The reason of the Lord speaking is this "that in Me ye might have peace." It is a world of trouble. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble". We all know that more or less naturally - full of trouble. Trouble goes, trouble

comes. New troubles treading upon reliefs. If then the people of God had no peace, never had any peace in Christ, what a life they would have, but they have an unknown peace and sometimes they are surprised to find this peace in their hearts, when they are troubled in their house, troubled in their circumstances, in their family. And such is the peace that though they are not made unnatural, and therefore they feel what they have keenly, there is a peace prevailing and they can say: I am troubled and yet I am full of peace. I am afflicted and yet I am full of peace. The smile of God, the Word of Christ spoken, conveyed to the soul by the Holy Ghost fills the sinner with solid peace. Were you ever surprised at yourself when a trouble could not trouble you, when a burden was easy, when the will of God that crossed your will was acceptable and perfect to you, when you were persuaded that He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will and you were well pleased that it should be so? When, in your little measure, you came into some little understanding of Christ's Word: "Not as I will but as Thou wilt". His human will He rendered up as a sacrifice to God. And then, when the grace of God is powerful in you, your will is offered up as a sacrifice to God, a sweet smelling savour, through Jesus' precious blood. God does not break to pieces and utterly destroy the will of man but He does take hold of the will of His people and bends and supple it and moves it and guides it and makes His divine will so pleasing that the sinner says: "Not as I will but as Thou wilt" and that brings the word of Christ in: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" A solemn, broken-hearted submission to the divine will that controls, orders. That will which is called "the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush". Now this is the end of Christ saying these things, on which one might make this remark, that Christ's word is intended to work some effect in the soul. It is not a mere sound, it is not a dry doctrine. It is a word that has an intention, a divine intention, and if that intention is never accomplished in us then it is truly dreadful and is the blackest of black marks against us, and we may well search and try our ways in this. Does the Word of God ever affect us so as to bring us into this blessed place that "in Me ye might have peace".

Then the Lord makes a declaration as it were independent of what

has preceded it, yet there is a connection. "In the world ye shall have tribulation", affliction, pressure. To these disciples the Jewish world was their affliction. The bitter persecution, the killing with the sword of some of the Apostles, the great persecution that raged and scattered the disciples who went everywhere preaching the Word. The devil missed his mark and God gained His end. He would have the gospel preached to every creature and if Jerusalem had been peaceful and the rulers had allowed the Apostles to preach in that city, well there would have been no scattering. If England were full of persecutors and Brighton were all exempt, we should not be running into another place. God has an end and He gained it in these Apostolic days. He gained it by persecution. There was a great persecution and the disciples were scattered and the dispersion were scattered, went about everywhere, not dumb, not idle, but preaching the Word and the Word of God grew and multiplied. In the supremacy in the dark ages, popery persecuted and slew the saints, Spain, the arch persecutor, in those days, of the saints, burying many poor saints of God in Holland alive and in various ways injuring them. They had persecution, tribulation, pressed out of measure. Who knows what we have before us. The ritualists in the national church are not silent about this. If they had the power they would soon come into this chapel or into our houses and we should know very well their enmity and their bitterness, for they say plainly they would not tolerate these protestants neither would the Church of Rome. You younger people may come into solemn times. Some of us who are older may escape them, I may, but you who are younger may come into very solemn times of persecution in some form. I do not say, nor pretend to say, what the form will be, but it will be a persecution, a tribulation, a pressure, an affliction. Happy the man who is enabled to be faithful unto death, to keep the word of Christ's patience. O but it will be an arousing, days when many sleeping saints will be rudely, so to speak, awakened and will find out that they have been sleeping easily on a comfortable profession and they will need then to trim their lamps and then, blessed be God, they will find they have got oil in their vessels. But tribulation in two other ways, persecution, may come. The Apostle Paul speaks of members in him, sin in his members, sin ruling or seeking to rule, and this brings affliction, tribulation, and I speak to the saints of God in this. This tribulation, the will that rebels, the understanding that goes after

various things that are not profitable, the affections that fix themselves on improper objects. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life; covetousness, which is idolatry, evil concupiscence, rebellion against God, choosing the world before God. Do I speak a strange language to all of you? No. You know what I mean. I need not particularise. You can fill up for yourselves, you can say I know what he means. Well, this is affliction. The Apostle Paul had it and he says of it "O wretched man that I am". "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that do I". O wretched man, I am baulked, I am hindered, I am thrown down, I am betrayed into sin. "The good that I would I do not". You know. O it is very solemn. And this we are to have in this world. Christ has not promised two heavens. We seek a city. Here we have no abiding city. The word is, concerning Israel, and from thence they went to Oboth from whence they went to another place and all through the 21st chapter of Numbers, which I read last Lord's Day evening. From thence and thence. It is from one thing to another, from one experience to another, from one sin to another. In the world, not in heaven, in the world. Soon some of us will, as we hope, be in heaven. No tribulation there, because no sin. No hunger unappeased, no thirst unsatiated there. It is all here. The lost have their best in this world. The saints have their worst in this world and they go to heaven and what is held in reserve for them. Tribulation comes from the persecution and pressure of the devil. It is pressure, it is affliction. He seizes, as it were sometimes, He seizes the soul, he presses it. Sometimes to blasphemy - what a solemn, sad feeling that is. Sometimes to sleepiness - the flesh is unwilling, the spirit is willing. The flesh is weak. Sometimes he, as it were, drives every good thing out of your mind and questions the reality of the work of grace. Sometimes he says there is no help for you in God and sometimes he goes further than that. He goes as far as he can in this temptation. Sometimes he says there is no God and this is tribulation. Only sinners who suffer it can understand it.

What follows this declaration? The exhortation: "Be of good cheer". Why, says a sinner, I cannot possibly be cheerful with this trouble, this indwelling sin, this violent temptation. I cannot be of good cheer. Yes, you can. O yes, you can. Let the Saviour but speak this word and you will find that all the affliction loses its

bitterness though the thing remains and, as I have often said to you, you can have trouble and lose it, you can lose it and keep it. The bitterness is gone when Christ speaks and says "Be of good cheer". There is a reason for this word "Be of good cheer" and He gives the reason. We may often say things for which we have no good reason. He never so speaks. There is always a good foundation and ground for what Christ says. What is this? "I have overcome the world". A remarkable saying: "I have overcome the world". Then this means first there is a relationship between Christ and this troubled people. There is a connection between them, else the word would be meaningless. "Be of good cheer". Look up, look out for a deliverance, for needed succour, for final deliverance. Not because you are strong or courageous but because "I", your Redeemer, Saviour, Lord, Helper, "I have overcome the world". What a beautiful word it is, the Saviour drawing the eye of faith to Himself, to Himself as being first of all in conflict. He had trouble in the world. He came to His own and His own received Him not. They said that He was mad. They accused Him of gluttony. They accused Him of possessing a devil. They sought to stone Him over and over again because He declared Himself to be the Son of God. The devil persecuted Him, pressed Him in the wilderness of temptation. The Saviour permitted that foul spirit, the devil, to approach Him and tempt Him in various ways, seeking to touch Him in the places where, if he sought to touch us, we should soon fall. He had false accusations brought against Him by suborned witnesses in the Judgment Hall and He was silent and did not stand up for Himself. On the cross - and here He speaks as it were by anticipation - On the cross He suffered, suffered the wrath of God, suffered the hiding of His Father's face, suffered in His sacred body, and when all was done He said "It is finished". Finished sin, finished tribulation, finished affliction, finished time and all its changes and vicissitudes; all finished. Much remains to endure in the Church of Christ, but the whole was done. This is the overcoming, embracing all things which are to affect, wound and distress and weaken and discourage the church of God. "I have overcome the world". Now when a poor, distracted, tempted, weakened, weak creature has faith standing in his heart in the power of God casting a believing look on the Person and the victory and the grace and the power and the love and the righteousness and the blood of Christ, that poor creature says, I shall overcome too. Yes, faith in him says, I shall

overcome. If some Unitarian or Arminian were to say to him what is the ground of your confidence, we are as sure as you are - Ah but they are not so - he could say, my confidence is not in myself. I am a weak creature. There is no sin in the world committed that I am not capable of committing, but my confidence is in the Son of God, my hope is in His precious blood. I look to Him who has entered into heaven and I cast an anchor there, an anchor that will hold fast. This is the ground of his hope. This is that that enables him to say I shall get through. Sometimes he says I believe God will bring me honourably to my grave and he may add, the reason and the ground of this confidence is in Jesus Christ. I look for cleansing to His blood, for strength in His strength, for wisdom in His wisdom, for guidance by His Spirit, and for support by His arm and for victory in and by His victory, and he may say with Hart

Christ who conquered for us once
Will in us conquer too

Some of us may be saying we have got no experience. You may have some and not know it. But suppose it is so, for a moment. You say I have no knowledge of God, I have no knowledge of the righteousness of Christ, I have no experience of His presence. Can you add this, I want all that? I pant for it, I sigh for it sometimes. My spirit sobs and sighs. O if I were but right, O if I had but God for my God, if I had but Christ for my Redeemer and Mediator, if I had but the Holy Ghost for my teacher, I would not, I could not, ask for anything else. Well now, you press that case as well as you can before the Lord. You need not trouble to talk about the case. If you have not a particular friend keep it to yourself, only press it

Urge thy claim through all unfitness
Sue it out, spurning doubt

and one day you will say: The Holy Ghost's my witness. Well then, this will be it. Now I have got all this I want the Lord to keep it for me and to keep me in it, keep the truth in me and keep me in the truth, keep me following hard after Him. Then if you have a whole world against you it would not conquer you. If you had a legion of devils about you they would not conquer you. And if indwelling sin were a

million times greater and stronger than it is it would not overcome you. Why, you say, I am a poor weak creature. That does not enter into it. The thing, the whole and only thing is this: "I have overcome the world" and I go to heaven for you and into My hand is put all rule and all authority. I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven and I will come to your aid, I will send angels to watch over you and I will send My Spirit to teach you and I will give you My grace to support you and you shall know what Paul knew and said: "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me". Now here we have "these things", Christ's gracious words spoken for this intention that the people to whom He speaks should have peace in Himself. Then the word "in the world", where you are the Godless world, the God hating world, the Socinian world, the Roman world and the modernistic world, all against your religion, against your faith, against your hope, in that world "ye shall have tribulation". O when the flail is laid on us we suffer. But Christ says "Be of good cheer". "Lift up your head" He said, "for your salvation draweth near". "Be of good cheer" you have a Father in heaven, an elder brother also and the Holy Spirit. "Be of good cheer". The Trinity is on your side, the Word of God is on your side, so we have no reason to be saying we shall never get on and never end well. May the Lord help us to heed narrowly, prayerfully, this word. "These things I have spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace." In the world, outside Myself, you shall have tribulation: "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world".