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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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John 16 verse 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"

These things refer, not to the immediate preceding context, but to the whole teaching, the intimate teaching of the Saviour to His disciples beginning at the thirteenth chapter, and when you get home read from the thirteenth chapter and you may find profit in reading the intimate, sweet, gracious teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He would by these things give peace to His people. He teaches them the beauty of humility, setting them an example in washing the feet of His disciples. Peter objected, but Peter was overcome, not by the Saviour taking hold of his feet and with physical force washing them, but by touching his heart, saying, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me;" and Peter could not stand that, that overcame him, and if you object that it would be too humiliating a stoop, too low an act, that you could not tolerate in Him who is Almighty God, you only need that He should let you see into that truth "If I wash thee not" He was washing the disciples' feet; He told them of another washing which preceded that "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet and the previous washing referred to seems to be the washing of regeneration and that never is repeated. If you are born again you will never die in respect of that life, but your feet will get dirty. The dust of this world, the mud of this world, will often defile your feet and then you will need to be washed again. Jesus must wash your feet. A very beautiful instruction, very intimate, and entering the heart by the Holy Ghost, it affects it very deeply and very sweetly. He continues His teaching and tells them a solemn, sorrowful, shameful thing that would happen. "You shall all leave Me; Peter you shall deny Me, deny all knowledge of Me" "No" said Peter. An impulsive nature will always deny the Lord Jesus at the first. You might have said to Him "I will never leave Thee, I owe my life, I owe everything, I owe my hope, I owe all the comforts I have and all the prospects that I have, I owe all to Thee, how can I leave Thee" "O" said Christ, "you will deny Me" May the Lord keep us from being blown over by a sudden gust of temptation such as blew Peter off his feet. Then the amazing instruction that immediately follows that. "Let

not your heart be troubled". What a word spoken to the disciples who were to leave Him. "Let not your heart be troubled", I shall remove all sin from you, and even the sin of denying Me, all knowledge of Me, shall be washed away. "Let not your heart be troubled, I go to prepare a place for you" I go to prepare a place for you where there will be no more sin, when the law of sin which is in your members will die; you will be eternally free from that,"and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye shall be also". Now if you get a little of Christ's presence occasionally here, you will realise the everlasting desirability of being with Him without interruption. O it is an attraction sometimes to sinners when they get a view of this, that He has gone to prepare a place for them; that there are mansions prepared and not one of them shall be vacant. So the instruction continues. Let me repeat it, it is intimate, close, sweet, beautiful; of a nature to lift the mind up, to use a word, to elevate the mind, to bring it to heavenly things. I wish my mind or heart might always be with Him, but it is not. One would think, if one did not know better, if one had no better or different teaching, one would think it would be impossible after having known the Lord, to be indifferent to Him and to leave Him and to seek a bit of straw, leaving the throne of grace, and the Person of the Saviour. We are great sinners; every saint sins as no worldly man can sin. We have peace when we receive His teaching, when He tells us that He will wash our feet, that He will do away with all the difficulties at which we stumble, and all our stumbling; the defilement of the dust and the mud of this world that have defiled us, He will wash away. Well have you not had some experience of this and again after having left Him and got your feet dirty, so dirty as perhaps you thought they could not be washed again, that you had worn His patience out, that He has come and done it for you; then you have had to praise Him. Christians do get repeated mercies, fresh touches, sweet visits, visits of love, power to leave their cases, their cares, their troubles, their difficulties in His hand.

"In Me" In His Person. Not much is known today of this Person. Quantities of religion but not much knowledge of this Person. If we knew more of Him we should more die, oftener die. John, when he got that wonderful vision of Him, fell at His feet as dead and you would do the same in your manner and measure, you would fall at His feet as dead. Can you pray the prayer that Hart wrote "O could we but with clearer eyes His excellencies trace, could we His Person learn to prize, we more should prize

His grace." "For the bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face" and you will find it so as you grow in grace, as the Lord Jesus leads you on you will find that much that you had in the youth of your spiritual life has had to go, and what vacancy that made the Person of Christ will fill. You will learn to feel more about His Person. When one looks back at one's earlier days, what shame covers one's face. How little one knew of His Person. Well, but He is kind. "Believe in Me" He says "Believe in Me, I am your friend, your brother born for your adversity, your great High Priest, your King, your Redeemer, your Prophet". Seek to have the High Priestly work in your consciences; seek to have His prophetic office fulfilled in you by His heavenly instruction in your understandings and seek to have Him as a King in your hearts. "Reign o'er us as King," may we pray. King in the heart, King in your circumstances, King of Kings and Lord over the devil and over sin. The Lord of the Universe having all things at His command. A little knowledge of this will bring peace which passeth all understanding; peace that keeps the heart and mind as in a garrison.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation" Tribulation has reference to separation. It was the cart wheel of Isaiah going over the corn, "For what is the chaff to the wheat" saith the Lord. It is the old Roman tribulum, it is that English flail which some of us have seen used; it has reference to the church, to each child of God. The word is not exclusively used in scripture with respect to saints but generally it is so used. The causes of tribulation are several. The first is divine sovereignty. This you see exemplified in the case of Job. Satan moved the Lord against Job who was a perfect man, who feared God and eschewed evil and yet Satan moved the Lord against Job without a cause; a mystery; I have thought more than once that Job's case in this particular as in other particulars is a mystery. Satan coming among the sons of God when they met and the Lord speaking to Him and Satan pointing out particularly Job in his great prosperity and divine sovereignty mysteriously moving, said to the Devil, "You can touch all he has got" and Satan went to the full length. If God sovereignly sees any of us walking uprightly He may have some lesson to teach us and He may give Satan power over us in some ways and then we shall know that Satan will always go to the full length of his commission. David seems also in his early days and during his persecution under Saul to have been without blame, at least there is nothing said in scripture, as far as I remember his history, nothing said respecting any indulgence in sin which led God to chasten him. Later when he did commit adultery and murder,

then God said to him, the sword shall never leave your house, you shall be chastened as long as you live. This may interpret some of your troubles to you. You may read your sins in your afflictions.

Another reason for affliction or tribulation is that God may be glorified, that ye might be made partakers of His holiness. He may fetch you, by trouble, from the world in some particulars. He may haul you before Him because of some indulgence of evil; He may bring you to His footstool and charge on your consciences what you have done, how you have become conformed to the world in some particulars, how you have committed murder against some people by hating them, how you have been stealing by coveting this and that until you seem in your soul's convictions hardly able to lift up your head. A reason also is this, even the third reason, that there must be an offence wherever the gospel is in power. "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth, nay but a sword, a fire, and what will ye if it be already kindled" No gospel, there may be peace in the world. Gospel in its power will bring trouble, trouble in your family, in your business, trouble with those with whom you are obliged to have dealings. There must be trouble where there is the gospel in divine power in the soul and Paul wishes that the Thessalonians might not be moved by the afflictions which were upon him. Tribulation more or less. Remember Hart's words "All contained in that red list, were not murdered martyrs." Martyrdom within, some kind of martyrdom without. The cross not only blessed Paul but it crucified him to the world, and it crucified the world to him and crucifixion was painful and ever must be painful. I am crucified by the cross to the world. I glory in the cross but it brings trouble to me; I glory in Christ but it brings affliction to me. So you will feel, so you will understand more or less distinctly as the Lord is with you. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" As long as we live, trouble in some form will attend us, trouble will tread upon reliefs and run an endless round. You see people let alone by the Lord, do not envy them. If you see a professor easy and comfortable and not rebuked or spoken to or convinced of any sin, do not envy him. "As many as I love I rebuke, I chasten" God's jealous love is an infinite love and an infinite mercy. I have blessed Him for His jealousy. It has brought plenty of trouble, but it has brought mercy. God will keep a person more or less spiritually minded by affliction, by tribulation He will use the flail to scatter some chaff from your affection, your mind, your will, your understanding. You say "I am scarcely ever let alone" Do thank Him for it. Be patient as He may help

you. "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing." No, it is not good to be without affliction, without tribulation. We accumulate wrong in our own minds. We get wide in our desires or sink into indifference if we are left to ourselves. Comfortable surroundings, a comfortable church, kind friends smiling on you and perhaps even not allowing your complaints about yourselves. These things may do harm to your spirits. O don't lie down in anything in this life. If you do, God may come and awaken you in a way you might think very rude, but it will be effectual. He may send a watchman to tear your veil from your face and expose you in the night when you ought not to be out. Tribulation will come. It is pressure; it is pain, it is grief, it is good, it is mercy. In the world; you must go out of the world if you have not to do with it but to do with it and yet be kept clean, that is wonderful. I do not mean merely to be kept clean in the outside, in your external conduct, but clean in your spirit. There is an attraction in the world to us all because we have the world inside. When God sees a poor child of His turning aside He may put a block in the way, a boulder, a stone, yea a mountain of difficulty, and nature says "this is not kind" but when the Lord comes, the sinner says "O, I would thank Him for that difficulty, that trouble" And is this all? No, this is one part, but not the greater part. There is another part, "Be of good cheer", when everything says there is nothing cheerful at all, when everything says there is but reason for you to be despondent, to turn away, when everything says the hand of God is against you. O that is a fearful feeling, it is a fearful feeling to feel that God is against you. It has broken me to pieces sometimes, crushed my spirit, for if God is against a man, what is to sustain him, what is to bring him through? I have thought of that word in Deuteronomy where the Lord said of a man "if a man should say that he would add drunkenness to thirst and it should be well with him", God says "I am against that man" I could never tell you what that word has been to me, "I am against that man". What if God be against you. Should He smile on you in providence, what is that but a token of His anger, if He is against you. What an awful thing it will be to any of you if your table is a snare and a trap, but what a blessing if the Lord is pleased in His great mercy to give you sanctification of spirit, when you are in trouble, to be of good cheer. There is reason for it. O, who could count all the reasons if one should try to beat the matter out, for this being of good cheer. A nugget of gold and nobody would beat all of it into leaf. It will cover your life, it will cover your thoughts, it will cover your spirit, it will cover everything, move away despondency, and say to you "There is no reason for this" David got some of it when he was, as it were, instantly arrested in respect of his despondency and he said to his soul "Why art thou

cast down O my soul" My friends there is good reason for good cheer, not in self. not in circumstances, not in the whole world. I think I named on Lord's Day, Rutherford's advice to one of his correspondents "Build no nest in any tree, the whole forest is sold to the fire" Good cheer then must come from heaven, must come from Him who says here "Be of good cheer" Let us try for a few minutes to look at it.

Be of good cheer because the Lord Jesus Christ says it. What He says is true. When Christ speaks, the faithful witness speaks; when He came from heaven, He came with good news, He came to speak the things His Father had told Him in the covenant to come and speak. He did the works He had seen His Father do and that His Father told Him to come and do. He brought good news of a Saviour for the lost, of a High Priest for sinners who could not approach God in any other way, by any other Person. He brought good news of redemption and such news surely as opened and applied by the Holy Spirit must cause good cheer, cheerfulness of mind to anyone so receiving it. Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. Though you are in trouble, be of good cheer and this says this - You may be in trouble and be cheerful, at the same time; you may have a burden and find it light, a yoke and find it easy. Christ's presence makes all things right. His good news so animates the heart with hope, so raises the expectation, so sets before the believer a bright, heavenly, eternal prospect that he can say "Though my cup seems filled with gall, there's something secret sweetens all". This is not a strange thing to all of you is it? Be of good cheer, for there is a Saviour, there is a Friend, there is a King, there is a Priest, there is a Prophet, in and to and for the church, and when what He says, faith receives, then there is a real feeling, solid feeling of hope and that is cheerful. Be of good cheer because the Saviour has said this "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee". My brethren in trouble, your trouble does not say God has left you, rather He is with you, He means good to you. O but Satan is a busy foe, a cruel foe and he may come and say "Now you know you have sinned, you know you deserve this trouble, you know you deserve hell after it, how can you expect God to bless you, and a legal mind and unbelief uniting, will cause such language to be received and who can tell the affliction it is for one to sink under temptation. He may, when you have a cross, he may come and try to write across it hatred and he will not let you remember, if he can avoid it, that God by Solomon said "that no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him" but the Saviour comes and as it were writes love on the trouble and says "Be of good cheer", this shall issue in your good, though for the present it is not joyous but grievous, nevertheless there is good to grow out of it. After you have been exercised, tossed about, fearful, fearing, weak, sinking, yet there

shall come the peacable fruit of righteousness; then you will say "O how good the Lord was to send that affliction to me" Then you will in your measure rejoice in tribulation, knowing now that tribulation worketh patience.

"Be of good cheer" because Christ has made a promise. Promises are great things; promises are an incitement to prayer, a help to prayer, a direction in prayer. David got a promise, a great promise, and it was an incentive in his heart to prayer when he got it. We read this "Then went king David in and sat before the Lord and said "Who am I O Lord God and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto" Then also he says "Thou hast spoken to Thy servant a promise to make me a house for a great while to come, therefore, on the ground of that promise, by reason of that promise, my soul says in faith "Do as Thou hast said". There is for sinners a general ground for prayer - "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved". That stands good for all poor sinners who are convinced of sin. There is an invitation which is general for them "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Too, there is a particular promise sometimes given and on that particular promise particular prayer is made. "Lord Thou hast said this to Thy poor servant; do it, fulfil it." Faith puts God to it. Faith puts Him on His faithfulness. Faith puts Him in remembrance of His holy promise. "Remember Thy holy promise" Ah if you have got a promise you have got a nugget of gold, you have got something you will never expend, never get quite to the end of. What a wonder it is for God to have spoken to some of us; you may have had a promise and forgotten all about it for a time, perhaps you have thought earlier "Now if the Lord does speak to me I shall keep it" In my early days I used to say something like that to Him, that I would never forget if He would do what I wanted Him to do, but I have found it easy to profess but it is not easy to hold fast. Rutherford said that he was afraid he might not make his vow good; he had as it were vowed. O, but weakness belongs to all of us. Better for us to say "Lord keep us, O keep us, fulfil that scripture in us "I will keep it every moment". We need momently keeping my friends, not a step can we take well without God, not a step.

"Be of good cheer" on the ground of omnipotence. "Is there anything too hard for the Lord"? What has He promised? Two things. To name it this moment, first that He will level mountains and exalt valleys. Perhaps you are in a valley. It is a healthy place, but not pleasant perhaps and you see a mountain but cannot climb it. O but says the Lord "I will exalt". He exalts the humble, He makes plain the path of the poor person in the valley so that that person shall glorify Him in the valley. He said He will level mountains. Dont you put your hand to a mountain to dig

some of it away, you wont manage it. God has said that He will lay mountains low, and yet faith does touch the mountain. Faith does say "Be thou removed." If you have faith you will say sometimes to your troubles "Be removed" Omnipotence is in faith; omnipotence moves faith, guides faith to the arm, to the voice, the arm that can do anything and the voice that says "Be thou removed" Be of good cheer in this connection, look at what Christ says, as if He should say to thee "Now you have got a world against you, but I have overcome the world" Think of it. "But I have overcome the world". But then, one may say through unbelief and in ignorance "What is that to me, I want it for myself" This is the connection, that there is union between the Saviour and His disciples and what He did, He did for them and having done it for them, He will do it in them. "I have overcome the world" I stood in your place; I sweat blood for you in the garden of Gethsemane; I was dumb for you because you ought not to open your mouth. When I was in the Judgement Hall I was dumb, because I stood in the place of a poor sinner who is dumb by his guilt and I stood for you and suffered for you, suffered the wrath of God, suffered the piercings of the Father's sword, suffered the desertion of My Father in whose smile I had delighted through all eternity and I have overcome the prince of this world and I have seen him fall as lightning from heaven, therefore be of good cheer. O believer, can you hang on this Saviour? Can you put your case into His Almighty hand? Can you bring a poor unbelieving heart, a wicked carnal mind, a perverse strong will, can you bring a dark understanding, can you bring these things by precious faith and put them in the hand of a great Lord God? That will help. "Be of good cheer" Let the saint sing "It is well" Let a poor troubled believer follow the woman who said to the prophet in answer to his question "Is it well"? "It is well" Well in my affliction, well in my trouble, well in my needs, well in my poverty, well in the pains I have, well in sickness. It is well. "Ah" but one says "If you were in my case you could not speak thus" I could if the Lord helped me and you can if He helps you, but mind this, unbelief is not an innocent thing, let me repeat, unbelief is not an innocent thing. It questions God; it is guilty of deicide, it wounds the soul, it barrenises, it confuses, it weakens, it turns aside, it holds the hands which are hanging down, down and makes the knees that are feeble, more feeble, it dishonours God, it robs the soul. O it is an enemy, an enemy to God and an enemy to all His people; but Christ says "Be of good cheer" A word in conclusion, be of good cheer on the ground of your prospects. We have prospects my friends if we have the life of God in us. We have a bright prospect not always, but in reality it never goes. I do not see my prospect sometimes, but sometimes I do. What is it?

What has Christ set before you? He has told you as He always tells people, the truth, you are to have plenty of trouble. "In the world, while you live, you will have tribulation." He never deceives people in that way, but what has He told you also "I will come again and I will receive you unto Myself that where I am there ye may be also" O it is a gloomy world we are living in and there is little or no brightness in it today. England has turned away from God, is trampling His Holy Scripture under foot. Modernism is growing, popularism is coming, yes popularism in wicked practices are the result of the Bible being disowned and dishonoured, but there is a prospect for the church and a prospect for some in this congregation. I will come again and where I am there shall My servant also be. He has said it to some. A good many years ago I believe He said it to me. "Where I am" Where is He? Where is the Lord Jesus? At the right hand of the Majesty on High, in the midst of the throne of His Father, having the fulness of the Spirit to send that Holy Spirit of promise to His disciples to shed abroad His love. He is in heaven to intercede for dumb people; ever living to intercede; He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In heaven He has the rule of the universe, angels are His ministering spirits, devils can only do what He permits them to do, worldly men can only go as far as He permits them. He rules the universe. O what a prospect, to be with Him, and this is the sweetness in it, there will be no sin there. I am glad sin is a pain to me; I have plenty of it, sin is dreadful. The hope of being without it, this is a blessed hope and God will never bring it to disappointment. When He gives a hope it shall live till it dies in a sweet fruition. Therefore, lift up your heads says the Lord "Lift up your heads for your salvation draweth nigh, it is nearer than when you believed at the first; lift up your heads". It is a good thing to have grace, a good thing to be held on, a better and the best thing to get to heaven. Better is the day of one's death in this case than the day of one's birth." Now may the Lord teach us this truth, teach us what this text means; open to us some of its contents so that we may rejoice in Him while we mourn over self and sin, while we may deeply sympathise with Rutherford I can never say how often and how deeply I have sympathised with him in that exclamation of his "O that I had not a myself", but we have a myself, but we have one who will overcome all of it; all its sin, all its turpitude and guilt, He will wash away. May He help us to believe it.