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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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LUKE 8 v 50

"But when Jesus heard it, He answered
him, saying, Fear not: believe only
and she shall be made whole"

The circumstances of the text you have before you. The ruler of the synagogue, Jairus by name, had an only daughter aged 12 years, and she was dying. The ruler came to the Lord Jesus, fell at His feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house but, as He went, there came an interruption. "A woman, having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment and immediately her issue of blood stanchd. And Jesus said, who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, who touched Me? And Jesus said, somebody hath touched Me:" - it was no ordinary touch, the touch of faith - "for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." This interruption was a death. The poor child was reported to have died and one came from the ruler of the synagogue's house saying unto him, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master"; no hope now. "But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole." To the great word, the reality, the miracle, the power, the prevalence of real faith, the Scripture bears abundant testimony. Hundreds of times in the Scripture, faith, either in the word "faith" or "belief" or "believing" and the contrary, "unbelief", we have mentioned, whereby we may see how wonderful a grace is the grace of faith. It is a faith which pleases God, that has distinct, immediate dealings with God. It goes beyond the creature, though it has to do with the creature, and deals with

Jehovah. This faith is that which God gives, which exercises itself on Him, and which He honours. He said to this poor father, filled with grief at the death of his only daughter, "Fear not". Naturally men might say it was like mocking him, but we have to remember who uttered the words "Fear not: believe only" Nothing now, no medicine, no physician. "Believe only and she", now dead, "shall be made whole", that is, she shall live.

I would set before you as enabled this morning a little concerning this great grace, faith. It is, as has been often said, a cardinal grace, a particular and special grace. It is said to be "the gift of God". "By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God". And this gift is without repentance, the special gift of God of which He never repents. There is much unbelief round it, obstructing it, hindering it, but, its being God's gift, it is neither taken away by Him nor destroyed by its enemies. "It lives and labours under load, though damped it never dies". It is a grace, being given, that He nourishes. It, like all creatures, needs nourishment. It is a creature. It is not the gift of God only but the creation of God and so it needs nourishment. Being of a spiritual nature, its nourishment must be spiritual. Its nourishment is the truth of God, the truth that it believes, embraces, lives on, is confirmed by, the truth, as the truth is in Holy Scripture either law or gospel. Whichever we may be under, law or gospel, that faith lives on. If it be law, faith lives on it in this manner; it sets to its seal that God is true in condemning a sinner. If it be the gospel that by the power of God is in the soul, that is its nourishment. Luther said, faith is a knowledge and so it is. Hart says faith is by knowledge fed, and so it is. Both are right. There must be a foundation, an object for faith. If there be no object there is no faith, only fancy. The object of faith is God. In whatever way and manner and subject it may please Him to reveal, He, in the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, is the object of faith, and you who have this faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, really know what I am saying is true. Your exercises, your fears, your sinkings, your hopes, your risings, your comforts, your peace, all of them are derived from the great and grand glorious object of faith. It is the gift of God. And then again it is said to be the operation of God, that is to say, the mighty movements

of the Holy Ghost on a sinner in his heart produce faith. His operation produces it and every act of it, every motion of it, by Himself alone. Thus faith moves. Yes, faith is of the operation of God. The mysterious motions of the divine Spirit in a sinner beget or, having begotten, strengthen faith, guide it to its proper object, bring testimonies to it. So faith lives, so faith thrives. When the Spirit moves not, faith droops. When Christ is not near, is not the immediate object, faith languishes. When the devil assaults faith, then its weakness comes to light as well as its strength, and its need of a protector, a defender, even God. The natural, beautiful faith of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden before the fall, had God for its object. Then the devil came and assaulted that and they fell. Spiritually it is just that. When the eye is on God faith is strong. When grace is in exercise faith is strong, and puts on the whole armour of God and walks in the armour of light and believes God is right in everything, that He cannot do but what is right. It is of God's operation, and do - the Lord help all of us who have faith - observe the operation of His hands. The ungodly are condemned in the Scripture because they regard not the operation of God's hand. Every godly soul more or less distinctly has much that he can regard as the operation of God. Some strengthening Scripture, some condemning word, some guiding of the Spirit in the soul, will always bring faith out into exercise. If He reproves, faith acknowledges the need of it and the goodness of it. If He condemn, faith falls down and acknowledges. If He encourages faith rises. If He manifests His majesty, faith worships, and all this is by the operation of God.

It is a great thing then to have this faith. All men have it not. That is the testimony of the Holy Ghost, not my speech. He says, all men have not faith. There are some who have not faith, and there is no destitution worse, more dreadful, than the destitution of this great grace, faith. If you have not faith you will never know God, you will never worship Him. If you die in unbelief you will never be where God is. O may those of us here who have faith praise and bless God for such an unspeakable gift.

This blessed faith, though affected by circumstances, does not live on circumstances. It is affected by them. If trouble comes, then faith has something to hear. If the sovereignty of God works in

a particular way, faith has something to do. If God smiles, faith then has something to do. In every condition, under all circumstances, though faith does not live on them, it is affected by them, and it is important, it is good. "Hear the rod and who hath appointed it". What is that? God says it - "Hear the rod". The wise man will hear it and hear Him who hath appointed it.

This divine gift of God has to do particularly with two things. First with conscience, with your soul. That will help you to judge where you are. Reason wont tell you the truth because it is corrupted. But if you have faith, the leanness of your soul will be told to you by faith. If God is silent, faith will know it and cry to Him "Be not silent to me". If God reproves faith will receive it and listen to it because a reproof given by God is called the reproof of life. The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. If God is pleased to lay on a burden, faith has got something to do with that, Who has laid it on? Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it? Shall trouble come to a family and the Lord have nothing to do with it? Shall trouble come to a church and the Lord have nothing to do with it? If you have faith, whatever thing comes to you in the providence, wise, holy providence of God, faith in your heart will have to do with it. Yes, one said "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good".

This faith again has immediate dealings with God. We are not told in the Scripture how Adam and Eve felt when the Lord said to the devil "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel", but, having had God's mercy shewed to them, very probably that word was something in their hearts, a hope, a strength, that though they were condemned by their sin and by the Lord, here was a living ray of hope in that great promise, the seed of the woman. Faith has to do with God. Abel had to do immediately with God. He brought a sacrifice, not an offering of fruit which he had grown, but a sacrifice which he slew and offered by faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain by which he obtained witness that he was righteous". Now here are two things, two points, in Abel's case, to notice. First, his offering. He offered of the flock, he offered a creature's life for his own life. That was faith. When Christ offered Himself without spot to God He made an end

of sin and when faith is in exercise it mentions that and that is faith's dealing at this point with God. It deals with the blood of Christ. Whenever you get real access to God, faith has no plea, no argument to offer to God, but the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith Abel offered that. By faith you will mention the precious blood of Christ. That is wonderful when, it may be, you have been looking at your sins, hypocrisies, vanities, foolishness, waywardness, wrong words, evil thoughts, until they become innumerable, great, greater to you than all other things, and unbelief says, can you expect forgiveness, such a wretch, such a vile creature? Can you expect God to bless you? Now reason, legality, will say, no. Faith will say, pardon mine iniquity for Christ's sake. It will plead the blood of Christ, it will go to the throne of God's heavenly grace with a boldness which is commended and which is given. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need". Now that is one thing in the matter of Abel's offering, that a poor creature offers, by his faith before God, the Lord Jesus. For His sake. The greatness of His Person, the greatness of His sacrifice, the infinite value of His precious blood, faith will live on, will plead, argue and wrestle with God, so as that something is brought, which is the next point, namely that he obtained witness that he was righteous, God accepting of his gift. Now this witness is the peace of God that comes by the blood of Christ - "Having made peace by the blood of His cross". And when you, through faith, prevail in pleading this wondrous sacrifice, then the peace of God which passeth all understanding comes. Some of you say you have not got it. The Lord give you power to plead. While you look at your sins, you sink. When you look at the atonement you rise. When your guilt is on you you are oppressed and pressed down into the dust. When the blood of Christ comes then living hope is in your soul. By faith he offered, he dealt with God.

You take the case of Noah and again you have faith. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet prepared an ark to the saving of his house by the which he condemned the world." The world was going on, marrying, giving in marriage, building, doing business, God not being in their thoughts. This went on while the ark was a building. What mockery must Noah have had sometimes to endure.

What a tax on his faith would be made, all things going on as usual; so men would say to him. But by faith he built, and when trouble comes or is threatened by faith you will look to that Ark of the Covenant and though men may mock, and the devil and the Ishmael in your heart may say, what is the use of all this, faith will run to the Lord. Faith has to do with God, not with men. Faith believes in God, the God of truth and not in men who lie. Therefore there is a great grace in exercise.

And again you go to Abram. God appeared to him and told him that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him. A little later the Lord appeared to him again and said, walk before Me. "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me and be thou perfect". Thou shall be the father of many nations. Said Abram, "Lord what wilt Thou give me seeing I go childless?" He looked at his condition; it seemed to contradict the promise and naturally he could not understand how the promise could be fulfilled while he to whom it had been made had not the child that was promised. And the Lord took him out one night and said, now look at the heavens bespangled with stars you cannot number. Number them if you can. "So", said God, "So shall thy seed be." And Abram believed God. Look at that; Abram believed God. Lost, if I may so express it, lost sight of his childless condition. No Isaac yet, yet God had said, "so shall thy seed be". He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now his circumstances were distressing; his faith was a bold faith, a glorifying faith, and he lived on it. When you have faith you will be surprised at trouble; I have often been. You will be greatly surprised at something that contradicts the promise on which you have rested, something that contradicts the very experience you have had in your soul, the confidence you have felt in God, the belief you had that what was promised was coming and now an impossibility in the nature of things comes on it. What a wonder it is that faith, in such a case, is spoken to as God spoke to Abram. It is like the faith of the centurion in Matthew. He had a servant who had the palsy and he sent to the Lord to ask him to heal his servant, and the Lord said "I will come and heal him". O, said the humble centurion "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. I am a man under authority having soldiers under me and I say to one go and he goeth and to another come and he

cometh and to my servant do this, and he doeth it". And the Lord marvelled at that faith. I remember many years ago, I remember when I was in great trouble, expecting, according to appearances and the doctor's fears, that a child would die, and I felt a good deal of bitterness, and I read that Scripture. And it came into my mind, what was the point in the centurion's faith that the Lord noticed so particularly? And this is it; as my soldiers and my servant implicitly obey me, so will this palsy depart from my servant if it please Thee but to say the word. So, when God spoke to Abram, He said the word and Abram received it by precious faith, and that is what you will find when trouble comes. Your circumstances say it is impossible that you should get that favour; it is beyond all hope. Then faith rises above nature, above circumstances, and says, I believe. You have an instance, again, of this wonderful faith in the case of Paul who knew, by God's word, that the ship in which he and over 200 people were, must be broken and wrecked. And, after 14 days fasting, and all hope was gone, what did Paul say to them? He said this; now take meat, you have fasted 14 days. God appeared to me last night and told me that the ship must be broken, but he had given me all the souls on board. And now what did he say? I believe God. The sea roars, the ship is breaking - I believe God. Here are rocks - I believe God. And there will be moments, solemn, sober moments, in the life of a child of God, when destruction in some form appears inevitable. God strengthens his faith, gives him a vision of Himself, of His power, of His faithfulness, of His glory, and faith says, I believe God. That is the trial of a living child of God. The child of God understands sometimes in his experience that word concerning the martyrs of Jesus as spoken in Hebrews, the chapter I read. They refused deliverance. They could have had their lives if they would have renounced the Lord Jesus but they would not accept deliverance at that price. No, no, not for all the world would the child of God give up his hope, his hope in God, and the faith that says, I believe God. The Psalmist tells us that the heavens shall perish (Psalm 102 v 26) and Peter speaks of the elements melting with fervent heat, but Thou remainest - faith's last resort, faith's arguments, faith's strength. I believe God; He remains when all things are dead. Now my friends, if you have got this faith, and I believe some of you have, this will be the very last point and resort of your soul - Thou remainest.

And again, this faith has an understanding in it. Faith is by knowledge fed. It is not naked, it is not blind, it is not without understanding. It will say to the enemy, what you argue is true. There is no natural possibility of this or that. It will say to unbelief, be gone. It will say to reason, I must offer you up. Luther speaks of that, the beast reason must be killed and offered. It will come to that, an understanding. What understanding? The understanding of God in some way, as Paul speaks to the Colossians (1 v 10) "increasing in the knowledge of God." There is an understanding at times, by the sweet feeling of it, of the love of God. Oh how sweetly it comes, softly, like a soft wind gently flowing over your spirit - I have loved thee - and the love comes and you feel it, you enter into it, you understand that it is yours, the gift of God, that it embraces you and now you feel its power in your soul. And faith lives here, rejoices here. Sometimes there is an understanding given in the Person of Christ and, as John says, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life". Who opened your eyes? The Lord. Who appeared to you? The Lord. Who gave you understanding in the divine Person of the Son of God and of the incarnation of that Person? The Holy Spirit. What does faith do? Live on God. Here is a spirit of worship. The man, whose eyes Christ had opened, when he knew Christ and saw Him, fell down and worshipped Him. Worship belongs to vital religion and it is connected with faith. Jesus said "Fear not". Have not you sometimes felt that, with all the trouble, fears, despondency, sinfulness, sins and guilt, as if you could say to all, be gone, I believe.

This is the faith that is called the faith of God's elect, peculiar to them, the work of God in them, and Himself the great object of it. "Believe only". Look at your dead child - "Believe only". Look at the hindrance, the providential hindrance that kept Christ from the house before the child died - "Believe only". Said the disciples to Christ, when He told them plainly that Lazarus was dead, why go into Judea? Said Christ to them, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there". We little know at times why God delays. A word from Christ would have kept Lazarus alive, and this child of

the ruler of the synagogue, but neither did He speak to this or that. He says to His disciples, "I am glad for your sakes", I am glad because it will confirm your faith, I am glad because you will see a display of my power, that is of My divine Person. So, to the poor father He said, "Fear not, believe only". Look no longer at that child, breathless. Look no longer at that cold corpse. "Believe only". Ah it is not easy to look away from yourself, your dead self, your poor self. It is not easy to look away from circumstances that contradict the promise of God. But Jesus said "Believe only". Do not believe that death is immutable, do not believe that that death cannot be made a living child again. Well, this is faith that will conquer death, and overcome the devil. Hezekiah turned to the wall and poured him out a prayer which conquered pain, brought relief, and removed despair with all its heavy load, brought the recanting prophet back and turned the mind of God. Jacob had it - "I will not let Thee go". Can you hold God? Can you hold Him to His promise? Can you hold Him to the hope He has given you? Can you hold Him to the revelation of the Lord Jesus which some Scripture made to your spirit? Can you hold Him to these things? Then it is faith, faith in the Lord Jesus, in the bleeding Lamb. "She shall be made whole". What? Yes, this dead child shall live. Your circumstances healed? Perhaps not. But if your soul is healed, that is better. If, what you have hoped in respect of circumstances or friends, should not be realised, yet if God comes to your spirit, if He heals your soul, if He cleanses your conscience, if He reconciles you to Himself, in this affliction, you have got something good, better than the whole world. "She shall be made whole." Gain by loss, health of soul by some sickness, restoration by some destruction. Near to God by a driving affliction that seemed as if it would drive you from God. "Believe only". A naked faith on a living God, a faith unsupported by circumstances, unsupported by feeling for a time, contradicted by appearances. Faith living, acting, moving, cleaving to God, hanging upon Him. I have not been invited for a month to come to the king, my husband. So, said Esther, the queen. But there was trouble, there was a threat of the life of the nation to which Esther belonged. The only word that could prevent that was the word of the king. I will go, unbidden, I will go and if I perish I perish, and she went. And if you have faith you may not have had any particular bidding to the throne of grace for a time, but your case is urgent, your need very great.

Then go, go my friends. Afflicted soul, go, tried soul, go. The mystery of faith is this, it lives and labours under load, though damped it never dies. When you look at yourself, down you sink. When you look by faith to the Lord up you will rise. When you look at your weakness you will say, I shall never overcome. When you look at grace, a mighty Jesus, then you will hang on Him and cast your weakness on Him. When you look at your many needs and no appearance of supplies, then you will say, what am I to do. When God says look to Me O all ye ends of the earth, then so looking you will find sufficient in Him, quite enough. Moses looked at the multitude of Israel. He looked, as he thought, at the full supply the world could afford, and how are these people to live for a month. When God spoke, Moses could believe. Faith, the operation of God, moves in sweet accord with those operations. Does He lead you in His teaching to the Son of God? Then you will go by faith to Him. Every operation of the Spirit of God will bring you to this. "Believe only". All will be well. The whole of the crew, the whole of the men in the ship, shall get to land, and so it came to pass, some on boards and some on pieces of the ship, they all came to land. And so fainting souls get crutches, get helps, get strength, get communion, encouragements, and so they get to heaven, and so some here will, and everything will be made whole. May the Lord help us to "believe only".

AMEN.