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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Wednesday Evening
2nd April 1930

Text Matthew 28 verses 18 - 20

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The circumstances of the text are very striking, very remarkable, Jesus was just risen from the dead, He came forth out of the grave, by His own right to live. He came forth from the grave by the just omnipotence of His Father. He had a right to live because, being surety for His people, and having paid the full price that His suretyship demanded, that the law demanded, it was right and proper that He, having given His life in payment, should now live. And this seems to be implied in that part of the Gospel of John, where Christ said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." (John 10 verses 17 & 18. A remarkable passage, implying as I have said, the right of the Lord Jesus to live. "I have power to take it again," His death was a remarkable death, not before nor since has there been another death like it, nor will there ever be. It was a voluntary death, He truly died, and came down to this earth for that purpose. He gave "His life a ransom for many," (Mark 10 verse 45). and bore the sins of His own people in His own body on the tree. He died the death that they deserved to die, that they must have died, if he had not given His life for them. A glimpse of this by precious faith will fill the soul with wonder, and introduce liberty into the conscience, and bring the peace of God which passeth all understanding. If you see Him, you will believe what I say, and know more than I can express. To see that willingness, that infinite love expressed in a willingness to die.

How willing was Jesus to die,
That we fellow-sinners might live!
The life they could not take away,
How ready was Jesus to give! (Gadsby's 159 verse 1)

And if any one of us, now here should be enquiring by God's heavenly grace, whether He gave that precious, that infinitely valuable life for them, I would say, press your case, urge it, go with it again and again, until you receive satisfaction. He lives, what a truth, and what is involved in it, is more than any one can fully express. Nay more than the soul can hold. "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14 verse 19). Sinner what death you feel, what deaths oft come upon you, why are you not swallowed up? "Because I live, ye shall live also," is the blessed word of the Lord Jesus. He lives by the power of the Father, who raised Him from the dead, and it is important, and may be a blessing for us to notice, that He lives by His own act. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2 verse 19). "I have power to take it again". Then He lives because, the Father raised Him from the dead. And the Spirit is in the resurrection, He worketh faith in the sinner, "according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." (Ephesians 1 verses 19 & 20).

What a gospel we have. May the Holy Ghost press it upon every conscience, every living exercised conscience, that Jesus now lives. This chapter, in the early part of it, tells us of this wonderful resurrection, all things connected with Christ are wonderful. His birth was announced in a remarkable way. A star led the wise men of the east to the manger, where the infant Lord was. "A multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2 verses 13 & 14). Thus they celebrated His birth. His death also was most marked, it was no ordinary death, therefore no ordinary stillness in nature. When men die there is a stillness, but "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened;" (Matthew 27 verses 50-52). Nature marked the death that men were blinded to, as to its importance. And His resurrection was marked, "For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." (Matthew 28 verse 2). "And the Angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28 verses 5 & 6). The disciples were ignorant, and therefore incredulous respecting this wonderful resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They verily thought they had found Christ, and hoped for deliverance, but now He is dead, and with His death all their hopes were dead, they were buried with Him.

What fools we are, the same unbelief is with us, and it finds vent in various ways. And Jesus "shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts 1 verse 3). He appointed a meeting, in a mountain, so that the place, where not only His disciples saw Him, but "He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once;" (1 Corinthians 15 verse 6). It was a wonderful sight to them, to see Him in whom they had believed, to see Him who they had seen expiring on the cross, to see Him living, a real man. Who said to them, when He entered that chamber, with bolted doors, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me hath." (Luke 24 verse 39). These were indisputable evidences, infallible proofs, Jesus gave of His being the same Person, who had expired voluntarily on the cross.

And now on the eve of His leaving them, according to His prediction, He meets these disciples, He comes to them and speaks. He does visit sinners, has He visited you, in the spirit? He still visits sinners who cannot do without Him, the circumstances are different now, He is in heaven, but He sends His Spirit to show them that He is, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. That He is the High Priest of their profession, the rock on which they build, the Redeemer who redeems them from death and destruction, the King of Kings to reign in them, and for them. He reveals Himself by His Spirit, look for Him, you may not expect Him. It is the natural province of faith, to say, Come Lord Jesus, to dare to invite Him into a bad heart, to take up a bad case, and to deal with things impossible to ourselves. He came to them and He spoke to them, and what did He say? "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." This man, against whom His enemies wagged their heads, as He was on the cross, and shot out their tongue, saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, (the Son of God) let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him" (Matthew 27 verse 42). Ah one writes, and we sometimes sing,

Himself He cannot save,
Insulting foe, 'tis true;
The words a gracious meaning have,
Though meant in scorn by you. (Gadsbys 1012 verse 1)

Tis true He could not so save Himself from death, if He was to save His church. He could not save Himself from the curse, if He was to bless them. He could not save Himself from that death, that He was dying, if He was to give them eternal life. He saved others, they said, Himself He cannot save.

But it was only true in another sense, different from that which they uttered these blasphemous words. It was blasphemous in their lips, but true in the Spirit. "All power," this respects the Mediatorial Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. It answers to the word in Daniel, "That a stone was cut out without hands," and "The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2 verses 34 & 35). This is our Lord Jesus Christ. "All power" in heaven, so that angels obey Him in heaven, so that He sends His Holy Spirit down into the hearts of His people, to conquer them. He uses spiritual weapons to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. This is power, He has power to forgive sins, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5 verse 31). Power to do this sinner, to do it for you, if in your heart there is life and conviction of sin. If you cannot let Him alone, but must seek Him. Power to subdue all the iniquities of His people, power to fulfil the promises in them. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6 verse 14). I brought you from the law by dying for you, you are dead to the law by My body. Now the iniquities that are in you shall not reign, for I have grace sufficient for you.

All power over devils, popes and modernists, over all papists, all enemies and all the world. And power to take up the little threads of our lives, and our trembling spirits. He has all grace. A beautiful sight is the sight of the Lord Jesus, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, "and He hath a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself....and His name is called The Word of God." (Revelation 19 verses 12 & 13). His power extends, in heaven, in earth, in your business, being able to increase or diminish it, as shall be for your good. It is a wonderful thing to believe this, as the hymn states it,

My life's minutest circumstance
Is subject to His eye. (Gadsby's 7 verse 4.

That a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, and that therefore, whatever concerns a sinner, belonging to Him, redeemed by His death, must be of interest to Him, a real interest to Him. It is difficult to believe this, is it not, especially when things in respect to your circumstances, may seem all upside down. Especially when your spirit and feelings get so perturbed, so distracted looking at them, as to say, how can these things be put right, how can these crooked things be made straight. O believer, go to this mighty one, how often has He exercised His omnipotence for His people's good, before His incarnation, He was there as His Father's elect, and His servant, working mightily.

So the commission given here, to His apostles, has behind it a sufficiency of authority, a sufficiency of power, to carry into effect, what He sends them to do. No minister goes to warfare at his own charge, He sends these apostles, His messengers. A minister is a messenger, the angels in the seven churches were messengers sent. This was involved in that sight given to John, when he saw the "angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth. (Revelation 14 verse 6).. Christ sends His servants, Her sends them to preach, go and teach, that is make disciples, and they did it with Christ's mighty power, in those apostolic days. They said of Paul. why this babbler has come, he has set the world upside down. O how mightily God wrought by the apostles, thousands were converted. Three thousand souls under one sermon were given to Peter. I have often prayed God, to give me you, as my hire. Many and many a time have I named you, one by one, and asked God to give you to me as my hire.

Who could have imagined, could Peter have imagined, on that auspicious day when he opened his mouth, that God was going to quicken and convert three thousand souls? Disciples were made in those days, for this is what the word teach means, in this verse. Teach, make disciples of all nations, men have always been talking, even since the Thessalonian Church was in a measure diligent about that. Talking about Christ's coming immediately, whereas, He said Himself, that the gospel must be preached to all nations. How could He come a second time, without sin unto salvation until that word, was so great, and so extensive, and so glorious in its fulfilment. It could not be, and did not happen. If you ever hear about Christ's second coming, remember this scripture has yet to be fulfilled. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2 verse 14). And the knowledge of this glory has not yet been made known, dark times have come, but brighter days will follow, by the power of the Lord Jesus. Go make disciples, not by physical force, no, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;" (2 Corinthians 10 verse 4). They are spiritual weapons, and these weapons used by commissioned ministers have some effect. "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (verse 5). Have you experienced that? has the gospel ever done that? have you come to the Lord, and said, Lord, I now give up all pretensions to goodness. I give up all hopes, of ever doing anything by myself, that is pleasing, that could be pleasing to Thee. I give up all hope, of ever helping in my own justification, or assisting in the forgiveness of my sins. I give up all hope, as the poor lost sinner I am, and every thought of helping myself, is now given up.

I am just a captive. Every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And sometimes that is done with respect to your trials, and to your path, to your difficulties, to your temptations. And you have to say, Lord, I have no hope of getting through, no hope of coming honourably to my grave, but as grace is given, out of Thy fulness. "Go teach all nations," O the blessed messages that Christ has sent into the heathen lands. Very different from what it is today. For today men are taught to be missionaries, and they are taught to go with the Bible mutilated, and they destroy to the uttermost the poor heathens belief in their own God. And they have wrought no truth, no living God, to give them in place of it. It was different when Paul, and his brother apostles, went about, and other such men since then.

"Make disciples," O the sweet persuasion of the Holy Ghost, in the hearts of people, under the preaching of the pure gospel in those good days, and it has continued since. It does not seem to be so today, but it will be again, Ah it will be again, the gospel net will be cast out again, and gather in multitudes of fishes, and all of them will be healed. This is what was to be done, and when disciples are made, we must follow this order. When disciples are made, and not before, then the divine ordinance of believer's baptism comes in. Baptizing them in the Trinity, for the word is in it, not simply baptizing them, but in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I believe it was Athanasious, that great champion for God's truth, and Sonship of the Lord Jesus. I hope all of you are acquainted with what I say. I believe it was Athanasious, who said that the Church was brought into being in the name of the Trinity. The Trinity condescending to this ordinance, a wonderful ordinance, and if we get a sight of the Trinity in it, we shall love it.

When Jesus was baptized, He condescended to it, and the Father said to Him, and of Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3 verse 17). "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, upon Him.(verse 16). So there in Jordan's water, was the Holy Eternal Jehovah, The Trinity. Baptizing according to the word, is thus dipping, or plunging into the water. When this is done, then something follows, in the text, "teaching them", and the word teaching here, is different from the word teaching in the previous verse. This is instructing them in the doctrines, instructing them in the commandments of the Lord Jesus. A great field this, a wonderful thing this, to be a disciple is to be born again. It is to be baptized according to Christ's ordinance.

And then teaching must follow, Paul speaks of himself as having once been a child, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Corinthians 13 verse 11). And every child of God has to grow, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3 verse 18). He does not want to resemble, indeed to be like the barren fig tree, a cumber of the ground, He wants to be fruitful in the knowledge of Christ, in the knowledge of the Father, by the teaching of the Spirit. "Teaching them" all things, and "to observe all things." Are any of Christ's words indifferent? Are there any of Christ's holy words that you do not need to observe? Look at this, the obligation, observe, take notice of, seek to possess, and seek to walk in all the commandments of the Lord. Why says one, I thought the gospel was a free gospel, and so it is.

The commandment of God is this, that we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus for everything. That is, not the first act of faith only, but in the case of the Eunuch, Jesus was known and then confessed "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8 verse 37). But always, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." (Isaiah 26 verse 3). That does not belong to the first day, to just the initiation into the mystery of the gospel, but it is a growing thing, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," into the mystery of the gospel. And this is what has to be taught, this tells us that there is to be a teaching ministry. This is according to the promise of God, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jeremiah 3 verse 15).

This means if God gives a pastor to a people, that pastor's business is through grace to, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2 verse 15). The doctrine of Christ is one doctrine, because Christ is the same and the substance, and the fulness, and the glory of salvation. But that doctrine branches out into many doctrines, as we speak. The doctrines of grace, these are to be divided, so that a portion is to be given to seven and also to eight. The flock that dwelleth solitarily in the wood is to be fed. What a labour for a minister, what a business for a minister, teaching, telling poor people what the Lord's will is, that His will is that, they should walk in a path of tribulation. Telling them what that promise is, That Christ will be with them "alway even unto the end of the world."

Telling them that they must be continually emptied from vessel to vessel. That they are not to be quiet, lest they settle on their lees, but to observe promises. If you observe a promise, you will take it to the Lord, who gives it. And if He has given it to you, you will take it to Him. And you will find this from time to time, when you are enabled to plead a promise, that there will be liberty in it. God's promises are wonderful, they have been called, blank cheques, and He gives liberty to a sinner to call in, this and that promise, and take it to himself. Lord I need this, I need that, I am poor, grant me Thy riches. I am weak, bless me with Thy strength, I am ignorant, teach me that which I see not. And to observe a promise is a great business, because unbelief rejects it, quibbles at it, and says it cannot be fulfilled. But observe these things, be observant of God's word, by having it in your hand and eye, and your heart and "thou shalt meditate therein day and night,"...."for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success," in the path of life. (Joshua 1 verse 8).

A ministers business, (the little that I know of it, and the less I have observed of it,) but the little I do know of it, makes me say, it is a serious occupation, a very serious occupation. It may seem to some, even to some of you, not at all difficult for one to stand up here and speak in the name of Christ. Ah but there is something in it, there is a mightiness in it, requiring diligence, great diligence with much prayer and supplication. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Thus people are brought into churches, the Apostles were instrumental in the quickening and gathering of the people of God. The gathering of those people, was to be to Shiloh, and then in God's providence, they were formed into churches. Churches have many things to observe, they have to observe the rule, the great rule, namely, that the life of the Church is of God in Christ. That the form of a Church must be according to its foundation.

Every building takes the form and shape of its foundation; and the Church has to observe this. Are we like Him whose name we profess? The Church must observe this, that the building is no stronger than its foundation, and the building is no weaker than its foundation in God's sight. Do you observe this? Is the strength of Christ your ground of hope, for getting honourably through? Is the wisdom of Christ, your hope of walking wisely? Is the fulness of Christ, your hope of receiving supplies to the end? Is the life of Christ, your hope of being kept alive, in the fear and in the ways of God? Is the power of Christ, your hope of being well brought out of tribulation and away from sin? Observe these things my friends, observe what belongs to a church in this point.

Then also there is this to observe, we are to be "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4 verse 3). Not to make unity, that is God's work, but to keep it, to endeavour to keep it, as exhorted, which means that there are difficulties. The difficulties arise from our fallen nature, the difficulties arise from the temptations of the devil, and some difficulties arise from providence, these come, these hinder and hurt the wound, but God says endeavour to keep the unity, let that be before you. Walk as becometh children, walk in the truth. If you live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. So dear friends, this great word is for us to observe, "All things whatsoever I command you."

Hang on My arm, on My promise, look to My fulness, wait at My footstool, and bow in reverence. Look not, or begin to think about earthly matters, look not at your emptiness, I love you and therefore shall ever love. "I am with you alway even to the end of the world." Nor must this be confined to the Apostles. Would Jesus use a servant of His, to gather sinners to Himself, and just be with the servant, and not with those who are gathered? No, when sinners say among themselves, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; (they say this also, in faith) "and He will teach us of His ways." (Isaiah 2 verse 3). Faith says that, He will teach us of His ways. So the Lord's promise will come in here, as being the property, the happy possession of the whole Israel of God. "I am with you," with you in the fire, when I am purifying you, I am with you, when I am purely purging away your dross and tin, I am with you when the water floods come, I am with you when you are tempted and driven. "I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

A Church will have Christ's presence, as long as she lives in this world. What a promise then this is, come now my brethren it is a full text that I have read to you. On which I have made a few poor observations, but if your minds are drawn to the consideration of this text, so great and so solemn, so full, it may be, it may be the means of great profit to you.

Now we have just one part more of this word to observe this evening. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Those who are to be baptized have witnessed a good confession before the Church. Witnessing and so being thus received, the question may be put - "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10 verse 47). May the Lord help us then, to observe this commandment, and to walk before Him. Amen.