

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 17 April 1927

PHILIPPIANS 3 v 10

"That I may know Him, and the power of His
resurrection, and the fellowship of His
sufferings, being made conformable unto His death"

The truth of Christ's resurrection I endeavoured to declare this morning. It is a fundamental truth, a foundation. Without it there is no hope for any person for eternity. The prospect is black indeed if Christ be not risen. The Scripture abounds with proofs of His resurrection and the statement, which I drew your attention to this morning, in the 15 chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is of everlasting importance. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." May the Holy Ghost fix that in our hearts. The Apostle's desire here expresses the desire of every well instructed child of God and the longer we live in a profession of the Name of God the more we are instructed in the emptiness of this life, the unsatisfying nature of everything here below. And the more we feel of our own deadness, sin, carnality, and ignorance, the more the Spirit of God leads us into this desire - "That I might know Him". Paul was inspired to write something of his own experience in this chapter. He gives an account of his position as a Jew; his advantages as a Jew; of his acquirements; that he surpassed many, his equals of his own nation in acquirements. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He tells us that he was a strict Pharisee; a Pharisee of the Pharisees, that with respect to outward observances of the law he was blameless. That he was also very jealous for his religion which he felt was God's religion and that jealousy of his, led him to persecute the church and waste it. It was religion, religion that moved Paul to persecute the saints. Touching the law he was a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, zeal for the law, zeal for the Mosaic dispensation, he persecuted the church, but all this, God taught him to see and feel was nothing but dung and dross.

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Our best is stained and dyed with sin
Our all is nothing worth

and I know there are some here who say that in their hearts. God has taught us to feel it and we have to say it, and do say it

Our best is stained and dyed with sin

Who could dare, knowing himself, take his heart's life this day and present it to God for acceptance? Not one. Shall we then despair? No. A better hope than the law could afford is brought to light. The law made nothing perfect; a better hope does. That better hope is Christ, His fulfilling of the law, His offering Himself without spot to God, His rising from the dead. We have here a better hope. He compares what he was and what he possessed with Christ and down went himself and up rose Christ. That is what you know some of you. The more the glories of Christ beam upon a soul, the more inshining of Christ that there is, the more self is disesteemed, disowned, renounced, trampled on, and hated. I know I am not speaking extravagantly. I am sure it is so, that God's people do find that they grow downward in a disesteem of self and then they strike the roots of their faith, God given faith, into the Person and merits of the Lord Jesus. It is a mercy that God has been pleased to show Himself in Christ the Friend of sinners. My dear friends, what would become of us but for this

Christ is the Friend of sinners
Be that forgotten never

He receiveth sinners, stretches out the hand of His mercy and lays hold of a coming sinner.

Well, here the Apostle says, counting all that he had and all that he was and all that he had done to be dung and dross, he says he forsakes all, renounces all that he may win Christ - "That I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith". And continuing, he says, "That I may know Him". That I, an emptied sinner, may know Him to be a

full Saviour. That I, having no righteousness of my own, may know Him to be the Lord my righteousness. Having no strength, that I may know Him to be the power of God in my soul. Having no wisdom, that I may know Him to be the wisdom of God in me. "That I may know Him". This is a very comprehensive desire, not as easily attained as some think. A comprehensive desire and also an exclusive desire. You will never be able and, as led by the Spirit of Christ, you will never wish to mix anything with Him. God has given His Son to be known. Blessed be His Name, He has given His Son to be known. Then an ignorant, sensibly ignorant, sinner may say, I fear I shall never know Him. Well, if the knowledge of Christ was only obtainable by human wisdom and effort, there could be no hope for anyone. But, since God has said in His blessed Word that He will be the God of His people, and that they shall no more say every man to his neighbour and to his brother, know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them; I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more, then there is hope for the most ignorant person and I do think this, and feel it, it is an infinite mercy that God has undertaken to be the teacher of His people. "All Thy people shall be taught of the Lord". This Christ is God's Christ, the Son of the Father in truth and love, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells, and by whom God's character is known to salvation. That is a strikingly beautiful word in the Hebrews that Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person or character. That all that God is as God, Christ is, having the whole of the Godhead bodily dwelling in Him, and through His human nature that character shines and is bearable. There are two or three points that I would take up here as to the knowledge of Christ.

That I may know Him as my Substitute.

Behold, a scene of matchless grace,
Tis Jesus in the sinner's place

Yes, that is essential to salvation; Jesus in the sinner's place. That means Jesus suffering the penalty of the law; Jesus punished for the sins of His people, standing in their stead. What a Substitute. This is the Man of God's right hand whom the Father made strong for Himself. This is the Man to whom the Spirit was given without

measure. The Man on whom the Father laid iniquity, the iniquity of us all. The Man, His fellow. Concerning whom, He said this - "Awake, O sword against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zechariah 13 v 7). My dear friends, have you ever seen Him as your Substitute? Substitute provided by God; Substitute given by God, revealed by God. A willing Substitute, a capable Substitute, an Almighty Substitute. Capable of having sin imputed to Him. Almighty to bear, through the mighty moving and operations of His Spirit in His human nature, to bear the load that was laid on Him. A loving Substitute who said to His Father - "Lo I come; I delight to do Thy will O My God". What a Substitute, complete in every particular. Nothing lacking either in love or ability or suitableness. O may the Lord bring us to know this blessed Man, Jesus Christ, as our Substitute. The substitution of Christ is a fundamental doctrine. The Church must perish without it. No hope can be had without it. No smile of God can reach a soul without it. No blessing can come on a man without it. That I may know Him as my Substitute.

That I may know Him as loving me and dying for me. The Apostle Paul expresses this concerning himself. Of Christ, he said - "Who loved me and gave Himself for me". And this means His death. Jesus died a voluntary death. Therefore it was an efficacious death, a death that we call vicarious. The death of One in the place of many who deserved to die. He died that death that they deserved to die. O the bliss of this, when a sinner gets this revealed in His heart. When the Lord tells him that his sins did not prevent infinite love fixing itself upon him and making him its choice; when the Spirit bears a witness in the conscience that the sins which have burdened it and do burden it, were taken away and removed for ever by the death of Christ on Calvary; when that blood which Jesus freely, lovingly, efficaciously poured out - that is, when He poured out His soul unto death - that He did that for the sinner without his knowing Him, faith embraces Him then. Faith offers Him before God as it is in Isaiah. "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

That I may know Him as having entered into heaven for me. "Whither our Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." He is there for sinners. He is there to protect them by His intercession, by His power, by His love, by His goodness, by His providence, by His Spirit, whom He sends. He is there in their interest. There is nothing can come to them; no danger can be about them; no affliction can be on them; no weakness can be felt by them; no sin in them to torment them can ever be, without the vigilant eye, the ever moving love, and the sweet compassion and the divine protection of Jesus our Forerunner, now in heaven. The knowledge of this gives us confidence. The knowledge of this breaks the heart into contrition, melts the soul into love, draws it out into a holy confidence and trust in the Lord.

Myself into Thy arms I cast
I trust I shall be saved at last

That I may know Him as the Prophet. It was the work of a prophet, under God, to say things that should be. God, by His prophets, called things which were not as though they were. By Isaiah He spoke of Christ as having come and having accomplished salvation. Jesus is a Prophet in the church. Said God, by Moses, to the Israelites "A prophet like unto me", that is to Moses, "will the Lord your God raise up unto you. Him shall ye hear in all things." He tells a sinner about the present, about the past, and about the future. He tells him about the present - He says "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". He tells him about the past - that his name is engraved on the palms of His hands. He tells him about the future - "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world", and therefore you shall overcome the world. He tells him of his needs and promises to supply them; of his weakness, and promises strength to him; of their emptiness and promises to fill them with good things. O what a Prophet Christ is in the heart and understanding of His people.

That I may know Him as a Priest in the conscience; High Priest in heaven exercising that blessed office in the conscience, for His blood, freely shed, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

That I may know Him as my habitation and my refuge in every time of storm and trouble. As my supply in case of every need that can come to me. That I may know Him as my guide, as my King, as my Friend. Now may the Lord reveal this in us. Christ is all I have said and infinitely more. He bears these characters; He sustains the offices I have named. Yea, He upholds all things by the Word of His power.

Now if you know, if I know, yourselves and myself as lost, ruined, empty, weak, foolish creatures, then we shall find this that in our souls there will be the desire that is here expressed - "That I may know Him". He filleth all things, my friends. He maketh all things new. Therefore, to know Him is to be saved, is to be one with Him, is to be a child of God, is to have the Spirit of Adoption crying Abba Father, is to be sealed unto the day of redemption and is to have the earnest of the Spirit in the heart.

Now I have said enough for us, if I said no more this evening, and God should help you to take hold of it and meditate upon it, you have got quite enough. But I will try to go a little into what follows - "And the power of His resurrection". The doctrine of His resurrection I endeavoured to express to you this morning. This resurrection of Christ was by the power of God. It is called the glory of God. Raised by the glory of God, the glorious power, the glorious justice, and the glorious love and the glorious mercy and the glorious truth and the glorious faithfulness of God. O, if we assume, as indeed we may, the resurrection of Christ, we may also readily receive all the things that follow that resurrection, glorious resurrection indeed. And the Apostle seems to me to express these things in this one word "power". That I may know the power of His resurrection. It is said of Christ that He died unto sin once, to die no more. He liveth after the power of an endless life. He lived here, dear friends, as a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He lived under the burden of imputed sin. He lived under the curse of a broken law. He lived as a servant of His Father. He lived ministering, not being ministered to, but ministering. Men never ministered to Him - Angels did in the wilderness of temptation and in the garden of Gethsemane - but He came to minister and to give His

life a ransom for many. When He arose then He had no imputed sin remaining on Him and it is said, He liveth after the power of an endless life. And the power of His resurrection in His people is known by the communication of that life to them. By that they rise from their spiritual death. By that they arise in their desires after God. By that they hunger and thirst after righteousness. They press toward the mark of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and by that the world becomes dead to them; they become dead to the world. They live another life, a different life, a blessed life. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish". Nothing short of the power of Christ's resurrection could bring a sinner out of the grave of death, out of the prison of the law, away from his filthiness and his guilt and present him spotless and without blame before God. That, as I apprehend, is the beginning of knowing the power of Christ's resurrection. It continues. "He liveth after the power of an endless life", so this continues in His people. And it continues in them in some particulars, as first it continues and operates in them in the removal from their consciences of sin. May we never forget that when Christ died He died unto sin and when He arose He arose without any of that on Him under which, and for which, He died. Now if that power that brought Him from the grave, spotless with respect to imputed sin, no more to die under imputed sin, be made known in us, must not one thing be the removal from us, from our consciences, of our sins? It seems to follow that as Christ's resurrection manifested Him to have put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so, if the power that brought Him from the grave be exerted in us, it will be the deliverance from the guilt of sin. And I would press this point on your attention, for it is very vital. By this a sinner passes from under the rod into the bond of the covenant. By this he comes out of his prison house, Christ saying to him, Come forth. By this he comes out of the darkness of a spiritual death into the light of a spiritual day. It must be so. Here is the gospel liberty of which we speak sometimes. Here is a sinner freed from the law that held him a prisoner; freed from the charges of the law that were death to him; free from the guilt that pressed him into self-despair and very near to the pit of black despair but not into it. The power of Christ's resurrection implies that, the removal of sin from the conscience. When Jesus arose from the dead all that sin that had burdened His heart and made Him a Man of Sorrows was left, cast behind

His back into the depths of the sea, and God's justice and love and truth and mercy for the church brought Him out of the grave. Then if we know that delivering power, delivering Christ from the pains of death and the grave, surely it will be in this, the forgiveness of our sins. "Him hath God exalted at His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." I hope the Lord will look on those of us here who are born again but have not, as yet, received this blessed power of Christ's resurrection. Seek it, dear friends. Press the case on God's notice. Confess the sins that you feel and fly to the cross as you are enabled by the Holy Ghost. Beg God for this, that this glorious power of Christ's resurrection may be experienced by you. That, as He had no sin on Him, you may feel that God has taken your sins away. It is written in the Ephesians that when God exerted that mighty power in raising Christ from the dead, He set Him far above all principality and power, above the god of this world who had tempted Him, above the things of this world. Jesus was set on high as King of kings and Lord of lords. Now if that power is exerted in you and in me, shall we lie always in the dust? Shall we always be subject to the prince of this world? Shall we always be under the hand of some darling sin, some master lust, some idol? No. That power that set Him far above all principality and power and might and dominion, the dominion, the usurped dominion of the devil, and the dominion of powers, that glorious power will carry us up, in some measure, in the same victory. The victory of grace is implied here. The victory of the Spirit's gracious work is here. The victory in a sinner's conscience, in a sinner's affections, in a sinner's disposition, in a sinner's renewed mind, in a sinner's warmed, pure affections, all here, in the power of Christ's resurrection. And also, this enters into the troubles, the afflictions, the anxieties and the cares of God's people. "Casting", says the Spirit by Peter "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you".

O Lord, I cast my care on Thee;
I triumph and adore;
Henceforth my great concern shall be
To love and praise Thee more (247)

Now is not that true? Have not some of you felt it? Have you not been

enabled to cast your care on the Lord? to feel that you, for the moment, in a proper manner, had no care? Not forgetful of your troubles; they are not intended to be forgotten. Not forgetful of the burden; you feel it; but no wrath in it, no anger, nothing wrong. God's wisdom and character and goodness shine in and through Jesus Christ and you can cast all things on Him. Family, business, health, sickness, supplies, wants, everything for the moment committed to Him, and your soul also. "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me O Lord God of truth". This is the power of His resurrection. And in that same passage in the Ephesians Paul speaks of this power, this mighty power of Christ's resurrection being in the saints, whereby they believe. Faith, O what a grace it is. They believe in God, believe in the gospel, believe in the promises, believe in the exhortations, believe in the precepts of the gospel. They believe. 'Tis one thing to think about truth; 'tis another to believe it. It is one thing to speculate as to the meaning of this Scripture and of that Scripture. It is another to receive the truth as the truth is in Jesus by faith and hold it fast. It is here that a sinner buys the truth, as Paul bought it, relating it in this chapter. O, what a price. A poor sinner giving everything up, abandoning himself, hating his own life, finding it in Jesus Christ. That I may know the power of His resurrection in enabling my soul to believe in God.

Was not that mighty power in the Apostle Paul when, on that ship which was to be broken to pieces, he said to all with him "Now I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me". He told him the ship must be broken but He told him that not a single life should be lost. And I believe Him. O the power of that. With that storm raging and the ship's planks parting and creaking with the certainty that the shipwreck must soon take place, he said not one of you shall be drowned. Now faith will sometimes be that in you - I believe I shall get through. I believe God will help me.

David's Lord and Gideon's Friend
Will help His servant to the end

Not a hoof shall be left behind; not a promise shall be broken; not a real hope be disappointed. That is the power of God; that is the

power of God, and a few minutes experience of it will leave a mark on your soul, a mark of Jesus Christ. never to be erased.

The power of His resurrection with respect to the future. The Lord had it Himself, this blessed power in His own soul. So He said to His Father, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption". "Thou wilt show Me the path of life. At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore". Now weak believer, this will be your experience in a measure. You will follow your Lord in it whenever the power of Christ's resurrection is exerted in your soul. You will say God won't leave me. You will say it, you will say it in faith. You may say it to a friend, you may say it on your knees to the Lord. You may profess His faithfulness before Him and you may tell your best friends, your dearest and nearest in respect of Christian experience. You may say, I believe God. He told me He loved me; He told me He would bless me; He told me He would never leave me nor forsake me; He told me He would guide me with His eye and afterward receive me to glory. He told me, in respect of providence, that He knew the things which I needed and should need to the end, and I believe Him. This faith is the death of that corroding, unbelieving care that sometimes mars us. It is the death of that legal bondage that holds us sometimes, and it brings us into an experience of that that is in the Psalms - "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold". (Psalm 68 v 13). You will fly as a dove to your window, even to the Lord Jesus. Yes, and you will anticipate heaven.

Further, "the fellowship of His sufferings". And this may be spoken of in two ways very briefly. First to partake of the benefit of His sufferings, to partake of the blessings of His death and receive into your soul the peace of God which passeth all understanding. This is being called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ; having fellowship in the benefits of His blessed death. O, my friends, they are safe for eternity who have fellowship in these sufferings. Also it may be taken as having fellowship with Him in those sufferings which He suffered, and which His saints do suffer when they feel the bitter pangs that arise from indwelling sin working. I have this belief in my mind that all the pains and

temptations and sorrows that the Lord Jesus felt in His body were little compared to the awful pangs of His holy soul under a sense of sin which was imputed to Him.

The pangs of His body were great
But greater the pangs of His mind

And if we have His blessed, clean, holy fear in our souls, the greatest trouble, the keenest pain and sorrow that we shall ever feel will be from the presence and working of sin in our members. I wish the Lord may give grace to us, that we have fellowship with Christ in this, that we can understand, by some very, very, very little experience of those pangs that sin begets and causes by the grace of the Spirit. He felt sin; sin brought Him low; sin made Him sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. Sin brought into His soul the curse of God and if we find sin in us that will be one thing we shall feel. Sin will be very bitter to us. The fellowship of His sufferings.

"Being made conformable unto His death". This was what the Apostle said of himself. "By whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world". He died daily, and you, with grace working, die daily in respect of self. Die to sin, die as to the indulgence and the power of sin by the power of Christ's resurrection. Now these truths very feebly expressed to you are what the saints of the Most High have their affections set on. Christ is the First. The rest will follow. That I may know Him as my own, that I may say - This God is my God for ever and ever; He will be my Guide even unto death. To say that is to say that you know the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in your heart to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. A greater thing concerning yourself cannot be said by you and to have fellowship with Him is to walk, not in the gloom of remorse, no; not bowed down in a sense of hopelessness because of sin, no; but feeling, while blessed with a cheerful hope in God's mercy, that you have in your heart, in your nature, the cause of all your trouble, hating sin and the garment spotted by the flesh. The fellowship of His sufferings. Then you will follow on and say "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the

dead"; if I may partake of, have a part in, the first resurrection, for the dead in Christ shall rise first. These shall meet the Lord in the air and so shall be ever with the Lord. Now take this passage, dear friends, and what I have said to you about it, as God may help you and meditate in it. Look at it, look at it in the face. Here is a good man, the Apostle Paul, who knew Christ well at the time of writing these things, yet says he, I have not attained. I do not esteem or count myself to have attained. There is much that I do not know. I want to know it and it is all wrapped up in that - "That I may know Him". May the Lord help us to do this and if we do it then by His holy and gracious power in our souls we shall press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ and so attain to the resurrection of the dead in God's own time.

AMEN.