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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 6 December 1925

Text: Psalm 147 v 5

"Great is our Lord and of great power, His  
understanding is infinite"

We spoke a little this morning upon the first part of this great text. "Great is our Lord." That part is not exhausted, never will be. We soon get emptied out; you in your own experiences understand that. A little that you receive is spent up very quickly and much more one may say in respect of the ministry, a little that comes, as given from heaven itself, sweetly, powerfully, is gone and one is left dry. So I am not going to occupy any of your time this evening by speaking upon the first member of this great word, but look, in the second place, immediately at the word - "and of great power."

If we believe the first, we shall believe the second part of the text. Though it may please the Spirit to give part of a word to a child of God and open it up and carry him no further in any particular scripture for the time, we cannot believe that God is great, and not believe that He is of great power. Let us not confuse experience of any part of any scripture, with a belief in the truth of the whole of the scripture. Our experience may be very far from being as extensive as any single text. One word may be sufficient and be made sufficient for us for some time. You may find it very profitable to meditate upon the greatness of God. He may be made, may make Himself, such a desirable object in His greatness. His great love wherewith He loved you; His great working of salvation, so that you have no heart or wish for the moment to take a step further. There is enough in one grape, if you get one grape from the bunch of Eschol, to refresh, to exhilarate and strengthen. Quite enough in one crumb of bread from that precious bread of life, Jesus Christ, to strengthen you for any conflict. What you get in the way of power, value. What you receive from the Lord to do you good, keep hold of as well as

you can. Remember what He says - "Hold fast that which thou already hast". Remember how you got it. He says "Remember how thou hast heard and received and hold fast". You will have quite enough to do to hold anything God gives you as long as the devil lives, as long as you live, for he will give you plenty of work to hold fast anything you have of Christ, apart from your wicked heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. You will perceive that your faith will have quite enough to do to hold fast anything that God gives you, but that is by the way.

"And of great power". And my first remark on this is - Of great power in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Apostle Paul says "Christ is the power of God" and the power of God is particularly specially known at Calvary, for though, as to His ~~human~~ human nature, and in His covenant engagement, He was crucified through weakness, yet it was not a weak Christ who was crucified, not a weak Saviour who said "It is finished". A mighty God said it; a mighty an Almighty God said it. Think of it, my dear friends. Now the power of God on the cross is this, as far as I apprehend it, and as I may be enabled to express it to you. First it is the power of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And the great love wherewith Christ loved His church and gave Himself for her, is the love, the omnipotent love of Christ. It brought Him from heaven; it carried Him to the cross; it was like mighty wings, making Him willingly fly to that agony, ignominy, shame, and death, that God commanded Him to endure. He said to His Father - "Thy law is within My heart". My brethren, all that omnipotent love could do, was done on the cross. There sin was borne in all the weight of it; there sin in the guilt of it pierced Him and pressed Him; there the law came to Him and demanded an absolute satisfaction; there the Father said to His sword "Awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the man that is My fellow". "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And there came to the Son of God, who had eternally been in the bosom of His Father, that solemn piercing, killing, grieving, wounding desertion of which Christ complained in the Psalm. "Why hast Thou forsaken Me." "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." All this came against Christ, came to Christ.

He was as a guilty person, as a liable Surety, smarting in His Suretyship. He was as one who, having undertaken, could not get through honourably except by doing everything that His engagement involved. He could not; how could the scripture be fulfilled? As He Himself said "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels. But how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

On such love my soul still ponder

The only way for God to bless us is by this suffering Saviour. The only way of pardon and peace is by this suffering Saviour. The only way by which we can be taken from the jaw of the pit, and from the burning anger of God in hell is by the Saviour suffering the hell of punishment in our stead. "Of great power" to bear all this. "He", Jesus Christ, "bore all Incarnate God could bear, with strength enough and none to spare." No wonder that the Holy Ghost places justification in the blood of Christ. "Being justified by His blood"; that He sets the cross as the only open door whereby sinners may approach the Holy God. No wonder that the Apostle should be inspired to say "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid" No wonder that sinners, under the teaching of the Spirit, are by Him directed to the Lord Jesus; that when they are about to perish, He should show them a way from their perishing condition, and the condition they are expecting and fearing to be in for ever and ever, even by the Lord Jesus, and Him crucified. And if you have seen this sight, if you have felt the power of the cross, you will never be surprised at the Apostle Paul saying to the Galatians in respect of their defection - "O foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." You wont be surprised that he should say to them - "I marvel that ye are so soon moved away from the gospel to another gospel which is not another." There is no other gospel than this; no other reconciliation of sinners but this; no other way to the Father but this; no other forgiveness but this. And if we turn from this holy counsel, this holy glorious gospel, we are indeed in a

poor case.

And of great power in the next place with respect to justice. He had power to deal with infinite justice. Why do I speak of justice with respect to the gospel? A gospel without divine justice is no gospel. Neither God nor quickened sinners could be satisfied with a gospel destitute of divine justice. How could God be satisfied without that? He is just, and could He see His law, His threatening, His curse, His character, His holiness, His word, all trampled under foot by a gospel that ignored them? Nay, but justice is omnipotent; justice is infinite, when you speak of God's justice. And who is sufficient to deal with outraged justice? Who is sufficient to take hold of it, so to say, and give to it satisfaction? Jesus Christ; none else. Now here I may bring in an important question with regard to conscience. How is it that the enlightened conscience can never be satisfied with anything short of that which satisfied God? How is it that a person born again, perhaps illiterate, becomes to know the vital, eternal principle of justice, and so know it as to see that his conscience could never be easy, never be satisfied, if it were not saved and made happy by that gospel that gave satisfaction to the justice of God? Is not the answer this, that that conscience, being enlightened by the very shining of God's justice, instructed by the line of divine truth like a plummet let down from heaven into the conscience; that that conscience, measured by the straight line of divine rectitude, has imparted to it a supernatural knowledge of what the justice of God is and that that conscience has set in it a rule, a standard, a claim, that can never be content with anything short of that which satisfied God Himself. If that is so, you who have got this conscience are very highly honoured, very graciously instructed. You have reason to bless God. O think of it, there is your conscience clamorous and there every feeling of your soul at times moving this way - I cannot be satisfied except justice is honoured. As justice has come to you, you feel now I can never be content till that justice that claims me, that speaks to my conscience, gets an answer that is as pleasing to my soul as the death of Christ was pleasing to His Father. Do not start away from this as if it is a principle too

high. I say it is a principle that the Holy Ghost puts into every conscience that He enlightens. Every sinner born again gets this line in his conscience and it is such a line as the devil and sin and temptation and time will never take away, and such a line as lifts God up, lifts Him up in the hell of conscience, for it is a hell sometimes that your conscience feels when you realise what you are as a sinner; lifts Him up, and says, He is just and would be just if He had no mercy on me. Conscience says it. I like to go back to the moment when this line was put to my own conscience; when, a young man, I was sensible of it. When thinking of that word, rather as if that word thought of me and spoke to me - Blessed are the pure in heart", I said where that Holy God is I shall never be. Look at your conscience, observe the line that is in it; observe what it thinks about God; observe what judgment it passes on yourself as a sinner, and wait on that God at whose justice you are trembling. Of great power to satisfy this.

Of great power to destroy death. This is the third remark for me to make. He had power to destroy him that had the power of death, even the devil. What is death? Death is that state of separation from God which sin brings about; death is that condition of a creature that consists in a legal separation from the fountain of life and goodness. I say a legal separation, a separation that is brought about that is to say by the operation of the law which has been broken. A separation which God Himself must inflict, must insist upon. If that be the case do you feel hopeless? Oh blessed case is the case of hopelessness that some people feel to be in. If one, ignorant of God, yet somewhat religious, thinks that he is wrong, he sets to work to put himself right, but when God comes to a sinner and deals with his conscience, he says I am wrong; I am indeed legally wrong; I am morally wrong; I am spiritually wrong; I am wrong in my nature, wrong by my birth, wrong in my thoughts, wrong in my life, wrong everywhere, everywhere. And that being the case, what is to become of the sinner? Ah says the Son of God I will swallow that death up; I will remove that separation; I will take it all from you, and God shall come to you and you shall be brought to Him, and there shall again be a contact between you such as never

was in your creation. Christ was of great power to do this. Brethren, this Jesus Christ, I preach to you. Of great power to swallow up death; left none; brought about union which issues in communion; brought about the opening of the door of hope which leads to God and which eventually leads the sinner into heaven. Of great power to open the new, the far off land, to the guiltiest. Of great power to remove all their legal death and all their felt death and all that deserved hell of which they make full confession. He took it all away, It will be the privilege of some of us this evening to sit at the table of the Lord. Now that table has a voice, this voice. This is My body which is broken for you; this is My blood in the new covenant shed for you. This is the gospel, the holy, glorious gospel and our God is of great power. What do you think of it, and what do you think of Christ crucified? A real apprehension of this I believe will give us to see somewhat of the importance and the greatness and the glory of the Apostle's word "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" and also "I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." And if you should, any of you, be complaining at any time that I am more or less a man of one idea and that my ministry is very limited and cramped, I would not mind it at all if the cramping be in this or be just always dealing with the blessed Person and cross of Jesus Christ. There is no other way for you to heaven; there is no other way for me. There is no other way for the peace of God to come to your hearts; no other way for your enlightened consciences to be satisfied and pleased; no other way for communion with God than this Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Of great power.

But I will take up one or two other points , and that briefly, as enabled. He is of great power in His word. The word of God is quick and powerful, and everyone knows that to whom the Lord speaks. If it be a word of reproof, there is power in it; it will bring you to feel guilty in that thing for which you are reproved. If it be a word of promise it will fix your heart on Him who has made the promise and give you expectation in that particular of which the promise speaks to you. If it be a word of guidance then it will fix your eye on Him who says "I am come

a light into the world that whosoever believeth in Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." If it has respect to some providence, it will fix your eye on God who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. There is a power. You may say I am a poor, distracted creature and I find it all but impossible to fix my mind for a single minute upon any divine subject. That wont alter this "He speaks and it is done; He commands and it stands fast". "Look unto Me" If He said that in your heart, would your eye be wandering to the ends of the earth? It would fix you and so fix you for the time that you would really be able to say to God "Oh God my heart is fixed; my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." There is power in His word, this Holy Book, this inspired Book - let modernists say what they will - this blessed Holy Scripture. God uses it; He uses it in regeneration; He uses it for conviction; He uses it for reproofs; He makes a rod of it; He makes a sword of it; He makes a balm of it. It is a quiver of arrows; it is a cruse of oil, just as God will, just as He makes use of it. Oh value the scriptures and look at them, if haply your eye might light on some sweet promise there from time to time. Blessed Book; some of us have great reason to thank God that He ever made known in power any single scripture to us. "Where the word of a King is there is power."

Of great power. We regard the devil. "The devil walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." What says our mighty God, Jesus Christ? I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes". And in that day when He rebukes him, He says He will punish him, Leviathan that crooked serpent, and the dragon which is in the sea, and He will do it with His great and sore sword. He will punish Leviathan; He will bruise him under your feet O believer, shortly. Paul pledged Him to this "He shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". Yes, a worm is to have victory over the god of this world. The lofty city, the lofty city, He layeth it low; He layeth it low. The lofty city, the foot shall tread it down. What foot? The foot of omnipotence, you say. Yes, and also this, the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy, these shall tread down the lofty devil and lofty things. Joshua said to some of the princes, when kings were

brought to him - come, come you captains of Israel and put your foot on the necks of these kings and one of these days some of you will have your foot on the neck of your great, your arch enemy. God will bruise him. What a prospect.

Of great power with regard to indwelling sin. Yes, of great power. He says, and mind what He says is true, and you shall know it one day, - "Sin shall not have dominion over you". You say sometimes, but it has. I lose my temper; I lose my patience; I lose every good feeling; I lose all feeling about prayer sometimes, that is to say I cannot pray. I would but cannot. I cannot believe; I lose hope; I lose heart; I lose courage. And when you do what course do you take? You say I am helpless. What course do you take? I can do nothing. I say again what course do you take? I will tell you. A living soul is a living soul in trouble. You may sink into many deaths, but one death you will never experience. You will never experience that word "Dead in trespasses and sins". Other deaths come but not that. And what is the course that a living person takes? He is hungry, then he cries for the bread of life; guilty, then he asks to be forgiven; far off, he prays to be made nigh again by the blood of Jesus Christ. Indwelling sin is too much for him; he asks the captain of his salvation to deliver him, to bring him near. We have got a great God to go to. Our great wickedness is in the aversion we have of going to Him. But still He says I will bring them. Having made Himself responsible for the safe, blessed harbouring and heaven of His people, He brings them. So He is of great power, and on this just one word more.

He is of great power in providence. Do you wish to see the ruler of the world? Do you ask who rules heaven and earth and all things therein, devils, principalities and powers? Rules all the darkness of this world. Then John shall tell you. In the Revelations he says He saw a Lamb as it had been slain and while there was not found one in heaven worthy, that is able, to take the Book of Life, the Roll, from the hand of the Ancient of Days, this Lamb prevailed, this Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed. All providences, all men, and all devils and all circumstances He manages. "All power in heaven and in earth" says the Lord Jesus



"is given unto Me." Jesus reigns, the Almighty God, the Man Christ Jesus, He reigns. Therefore what can you need more than this? It is the business, shall I say it, the business of a king to look after his subjects, to maintain his throne, and to see that no harm comes to those who are his subjects. This is the great work of the Lord Jesus exalted in heaven and He is of great power to do it. Bring your cases, your necessities, your weaknesses, your besetting sins, your temptations, and the peculiar things that are in your path, bring them all to Him, and you will find that He will take matters up. And if He is pleased to undertake for you, if He is pleased to say to you what He has said to some people "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper", if you say, O but there is a furnace and they are forging weapons against me, He says He creates the man to blow and He creates this and that; "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper". Of great power. Can you put your case into His hand poor sinner; can you go to Him; do you feel able to go to Him sometimes and in simplicity tell Him what is the matter with you and what it is you desire; what your soul longs for. He is a gracious Saviour able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And lastly, and very briefly - "His understanding is infinite." As I remarked this morning there is an infinite succession of acts; there is no number of His understanding. We soon get to the end of our wisdom. Our plans may be blown upon. We soon come to wits end and so we do not know what to do. Get to where Asa and Jehoshaphat were, when each said - we know not what to do. But He knows what to do. It is said "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation". Perhaps you have asked Him to keep you humble, to make and keep you little in your own eyes, and He may take two ways to do it. One is the way Erskine speaks about - Before He will suffer pride that swells, He will drag thee through the mire of sins, temptations, little hells. What a way to answer prayer. He lets sin come; wont let it break out through His great mercy into open act to bring disgrace, but will let it so work in your heart that you feel at times almost afraid to go where there is a saint lest you should hurt or corrupt him. And this is one way of answering prayer for

humility. You shall see and feel yourself to be the vilest of the vile. Then the other way is better and yet only, perhaps one may say, a complement of the first. Namely, He will forgive; He will purge the conscience; He will let His love down into your soul and you will say, O Lord how canst Thou be so kind to such a sinner. I have been glad to say such things before Him under the power of His mercy and forgiveness. That is the way to be humble my friends. You feel and prove yourself a sinner and then the Lord proving to you that He is your Saviour, and that your sins are put away, that He put them away when He said "It is finished"; that He puts them away from your conscience and breaks their dominion when He sheds abroad His love in your heart and sends His precious blood to speak peace to you. Well, but about this tangle that I have got in my circumstances. The more you try to straighten it, the greater the tangle will be. But here is the difficulty, to leave off our own ways and let our own business go so to speak. Here is the trouble to have no fingering of it. "Undertake for me" Bring the case as He helps you to do, bring the case, bad as it is, the tangle, difficult and to you impossible as it is to get straight, do bring it. He says "He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation" Perhaps you have said to Him, Lord it is impossible for me to serve Thee as I am now with this difficulty, this trouble, this irritating circumstance. It only brings the worst of me out. What am I to do? You may speak to Him in that simplicity and you wont be the first who has done it. And what will He do? He will bid you look to Him; He will bid you to acknowledge Him in all your ways; He will tell you that He is wise and mighty, and good and gracious and patient and that there is nothing too hard for Him. "His understanding is infinite". He knows your hearts; He knows that you are nonplussed; He knows the devil's schemes. He sees all the counsels of hell in the gates of hell and all the ways of the devil and all the peevishness of your own nature. He knows all and the perplexing circumstances that you have about you. They are all before Him. His understanding knows no number. He has overcome now; He can do it again. He has guided in the past; He will do it again. He has circumvented the enemy; He will do it again. "His understanding is infinite".

Now I must leave off. If I have said a word that has lifted the Lord up to you and before your eyes today and made you long to know Him more I shall not have spoken in vain. I know I have spoken slightly, but I know I have not spoken slightly of Him. I would not do that for the world. He is a great God, who would not fear Him? King of nations, great in counsel, mighty in working, doing all things according to the purpose of His own will. We are creatures, poor creatures indeed, weak creatures. We are afflicted in many of our friends; we are a poor little congregation this evening, there being many absent from us, but this is what we have to do, as God helps us, cast ourselves and our friends and our troubles on this great God. Great is our God. Think of it. Great is our God and of great power; able to do all things and more than we can ask or think, and His understanding is infinite. May He help us to believe it.

AMEN.