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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 8 May 1921
PSALM 87 v 3

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God"

We noticed this morning the foundation of the Church of God, that it is in the eternal purposes of God. He decreed from eternity to have a Church, a city; the foundation itself is the Person of Christ, the work of Christ. On this Rock, Christ's Person, the Church is built, and against her, as built, the gates of hell shall not prevail. They should as soon prevail to remove the Rock itself as they can prevail to remove the Church from the Rock. A building has both the form and the strength of its foundation and the Church of Christ has both the form and the strength of Christ.

In themselves as weak as worms
How shall poor believers stand

But the strength of God is in them all, the strength of the Rock keeps them all. O what a mercy to be built on Christ.

I would this evening speak first of all a little about this being built, being built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. "Unto whom" says the Apostle Peter "Unto whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house". This building is carried on by the Holy Ghost. There is no noise in it. When the temple of Solomon was being built there was no noise of hammer in the place. The stones were brought and laid stone by stone, being first prepared. Christ's religion is not a noisy religion; His voice is not heard in the street. A noisy religion pleases the flesh. Christ's religion crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof. It is a religion carried on between God and the soul. It is the teaching of the eternal Spirit of a sinner, that he is ruined. A work of grace is a great work, a very quiet work - not noisy among men - carried on between God and a living soul. A touch here, a teaching there, line upon line, line upon line. A work of grace is generally a

work of mourning, of seeking, and it is also a comfortable work in the discoveries which the eternal Spirit makes of the Person and work of Christ. And every time there is made a discovery of Christ to a living soul, that soul is, in the measure of that discovery, built up on Christ and he builds himself up on his most holy faith when he humbly and singly builds his hopes on the Lord

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' Name

And this building goes on. 'Tis often, as to our feelings, interrupted, but it goes on in the power of the blessed Spirit and every time you get in your souls a sensation of Christ coming, drawing near, opening to you something of the riches of His grace, the fulness of His mercy, the eternity of His love, the infinite merit of His sacrifice, whereby you are drawn out to Him, away from self; whereby you are led to dig deeper and get away some more of the sand of yourself, so does the work of God go on, and you will never leave off digging till you get to the Rock, and when you are there you will find yourself solidly resting upon Him who is your hope, your life, your salvation. "Ye are God's building", raised by Him for the glory of His sovereign grace and the exceeding riches of His grace wherein He abounded in all wisdom and prudence in the gift of life in Christ and the gift of Christ for a foundation, and the gift of living stones to be built upon Him, for the eternal glory of God. And the purpose of God in building this city is manifold. I will only mention two vast subjects in this connection. The first is that God may have a house - whose house are ye. Thus saith the Lord that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place but to that man will I look and with him will I dwell that is of a humble and contrite spirit and that trembleth at My Word. So it is a comfortable word for those of us who feel broken, with nothing to pay, no fitness for God in our apprehension, nothing to bring to Him, but must needs have everything given to us by Him. Says He - To that man will I look and with him will I dwell who is of a humble and contrite spirit. What is a humble man? A man who sees himself, feels himself to be a sinner. A man who sometimes mourns over sin and especially when he gets a view of Christ pierced and crucified. It is too much for his pride when he gets

that, too much. Pride cannot live before a crucified Christ. Self-strength cannot live before a crucified Christ. Self-righteousness dies before a crucified Christ. What is it to tremble at God's Word? To fear offending Him, to fear coming short - "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God". What a great thing it is to tremble at the Word of God. Beware of that joy that has no root. You had better tremble all the days of your life till you come to die than to have a joy that has no root. No root in God, no root in redemption, no root in the love of God manifested to you. "To that man will I look". You may, trembling one, think that if God looks at you He must look on you with infinite abhorrence, for you are a sinner. He looks favourably, lovingly, tenderly. He looks with a look that brings salvation. God will have a house. Holy angels are pleasing to Him, but He cannot let pardoning love out into their souls; He cannot bear witness to forgiveness of sins in them. But He has pardoning love in infinite plenitude to give to His poor, sinful children and so He leaves angels and comes to dwell with sinners. He visits sinners, thinks kindly and tenderly and mercifully and savingly of sinners. Come poor sinner, do not look for your own goodness, do not think about being sincere before you can be a hopeful sinner. Do not think of any qualifications; God will bring qualifications that you do not expect perhaps. One is ruin in yourself, for He came to save the lost. One is a trembling at His Word, one is a given humility, a humble mind. And sometimes humility has this exercise about it, you are troubled because you are proud. Well, that is one end of God in building the city that He may have a house to dwell in. "This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it". I live with this sinner. He eats with sinners, talks with sinners, speaks comfortably to sinners, allures them, brings them into the wilderness of trouble that He may speak comfortably to their hearts.

A second end is this, that they may offer to Him the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of their lips, confessing to Jesus Christ. This is an acceptable sacrifice. The temple of old was a type of this that the people had to serve God. They were to come to Him with their sacrifices for sin, the annual atonement, and would bring to Him the first-fruits of their harvests, and to say to Him that an Ammorite was their father and a Hittite was their mother, that each one himself was

a Syrian ready to perish, but now, being favoured, he comes to own God to be His God and serve Him and bring to Him the sacrifice of praise. This is one end of God. He listens to the ascription of glory to Himself in heaven by elect angels, He receives their willing obedience and ready service for they are all His servants, but O, earth has sounds for Him that are more grateful to Him than all the praises of angels. When you, poor sinner, can sing - Unto Him that loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood and made you a king and priest unto God and His Father, O what a blessed sound it is. Let us, says the Apostle to the Hebrews, offer unto God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the fruit of our lips, confessing with our lips to the Lord Jesus.

Now of this building glorious things are spoken. What a wonder if we are part of this building, if we belong to Jesus Christ, if we have a place in the house and temple of God, if it be true of us, as it was of the Corinthians - Ye are the temple of God. What, know ye not that ye are the temple of God, that ye are bought with a price and ye are not your own. It is said of this city that it came from heaven. She was the bride of the Lamb and she came out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Now we must look a little, by the Lord's help then, at some of the glorious things that are spoken of her, and the first is that she has her being from God; she comes out of heaven from God. True religion is not earth-born - "Which were born not of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God", born of the Spirit. O the glory of God in the new birth is very great. It is the implantation of a new life, a holy life. Every child of God has in him that which is contrary to the nature of God and he feels it under the teaching of the Spirit, but also he possesses a life that is pleasing to God for it comes from Him - "I give unto My sheep eternal life" and "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son". And the mystery is this - it is very great - that a child of God is in this, his spiritual life, like Jesus Christ, as holy as He is. "That which is born of God sinneth not". It is difficult to believe, is not it, that you, beset by sin, often hunted, troubled, pursued, constantly plagued, defiled, falling, failing, thinking wrong things, that you, such a person, can also be holy, spotless; can have a life so pure that it is just like Jesus Christ. "As He is so are we in this world" 1 John 4 v 17. What a glorious thing

that the Holy Ghost should come to a wretch defiled by sin and make him holy. If you have got a true religion, you are a holy person. The Apostle Paul says to the Hebrews "Holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling". James says, "Begotten again by the Word of truth that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" and Peter says "Born again" - Born "not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." This is the glory of God in the beginning of true religion, in the coming down out of heaven from God of the Lamb's wife. My brethren if the Lord should reveal this to you and show you that, notwithstanding all your sins, you really are then holy, you will see a glory, not to make you proud - the exact opposite will be the effect. O how humbling grace is, how humbling it is to you when you believe God has quickened you and given you eternal life. Nothing makes men so little, nothing makes them so hate themselves and their sins, nothing so utterly separates them from evil, as to know and believe and feel that God has given to them eternal life. Part of the glorious things spoken of the City of God is that God is her light. The Church on earth has no need of any candle of human intellect, unless God sees fit to use one; she has no need of a created light. No, and this will make all errant, ritualistic services and services that please the ear, and the eye, and the senses, utterly useless to a living soul. The plain gospel, simply spoken, the work of the Spirit in the heart, the touches of that Spirit, the inshining and teaching of that Holy Spirit, the power of truth, the beauty of truth, the life of truth, the holiness of truth, gathering the sinner from his errors, from his sins, from his wrong ways, this is the glory of God, this is one of the glorious things spoken of Zion. The Apostle John says - Ye have an unction, the unction of the Holy One and ye know all things. This is inside the covenant and part of it. I will put My laws into their mind and in their heart will I write them. They shall no more say every man to his neighbour and every man to his brother, know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more. No candle of human intellect here, but the covenant of grace. No created sun, no laboured service; No, just the Holy Spirit coming into a poor soul, opening the eyes, touching the conscience, quickening the soul, gathering the affections, leading to Christ - nothing more, nothing less. Having the glory of God. The glory of the Lord

lightens the city. Christ is the Sun of that city. All day He is to shine and there is no night there. This is the true light that lighteth every child of God that comes into the world. You shall not say to another, know the Lord. You shall know Him by divine teaching in your own soul and for your own self. O what a wonderful thing that is. God uses means, but He Himself is the light and the power of the means He uses. He is all in them and no need of the created sun. Worship is between God and the soul. This light shows death; this light shows hell, the hell of sin in your nature. It shows what rebellion is, what obedience is; what short-coming is, what perfection is; who God is, who Christ is, who the Spirit is; what a sinner is, what salvation means. This light shows these things. It shows too that a sinner must needs go through tribulation, that God has ordained it. As the chaff is removed from the wheat, so God will remove the chaff from His people's souls. And the Lord is this light. Do you get teaching? Do you get inshining? Do you get a sight of Christ sometimes, of God in Him, of the fountain of infinite merit? Can you sometimes in your heart say

For sinners Lord Thou cam'st to bleed
And I'm a sinner vile indeed
Lord, I believe Thy grace is free,
O magnify that grace in me

And the Lord is the light of the city. Blessed be God for His bright shining. And the glory of God in this wondrous city is also in this truth that He is the temple where worship is conducted and is acceptable. We meet here - God has ordained that we should assemble together - and may we prize the privilege while it is ours. But true worship in your souls - if you worship here, if any of you are worshipping now in hearing - true worship is carried on, not because you are here, but because you are near the Lord and He near you, and you can look on Him, and the adoration and admiration of your souls and the love of your hearts and the obedience of your faith in respect of the Lord Jesus and His blood and righteousness, these are moving and they are the worship that is conducted in your soul and it is Godward. God is the temple; Christ is that true tabernacle which God pitched and not man and all worship is carried on there, in and through Him. Glorious things are spoken of the city of God. Jerusalem, when the temple was there, possessed what was the life and the strength and the union and the good of the whole nation of Israel. All the symbols

of the divine presence were in the temple, and that was the glory of that city and the glory of that entire nation. And the holy presence of God is in His children - 'I in them'. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God. And if it be so, what glory there is here. And you will believe and follow me in this, that what I am saying is all for the glory of God; that it is not so subjective as to fix poor sinners in themselves, but it is so subjective and yet, at the same time, the object of their faith and their hope and their love and their admiration and their adoration is the Lord God almighty, the God of love. What a glory there is in a sinner who has, what the Apostle Peter speaks of, the Spirit of God and of glory resting upon him. The Spirit of glory, the glory of God in forgiveness. It is the glory of a king to conceal a matter. The glory of God is to cover sin. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile". It all centres in Him, my friends, and you will find it so, as you are taught and led of His good Spirit. A part of the glory is this, that there is a communication - there are rather communications made by God - to this city, to His Church. There are communications. He set up a throne, a Mercy Seat under the old dispensation and He said to Israel through Moses, their mediator, "I will meet with thee there and commune with thee". Now that, spiritually, means that the Lord's people meet with Him on the throne of His heavenly grace and He has something to say to them. If we never hear God's voice in Christ we do not belong to Him. We may attach ourselves to Him by a profession, but we do not belong to Him if He never speaks to us. But what does He say? What are some of the things that Christ says to His people? They are things which exactly suit the condition, the condition that they come into from time to time. When one, for instance, fears the power and the pollution of indwelling sin, and is led by the Spirit to go to God with his fears, to spread out his case, his evil case, before the Lord, what does the Lord say to him? Why, He says in the gospel "Fear not". Fear not "sin shall not have dominion over you". I will subdue your iniquities. Look to Me, depend on My grace, rely on My Word, on My power. Come to Me with your labour and your burden; I will give you rest. Come boldly to My heavenly throne; I will give you rest. This is one of the most beautiful and suitable and merciful communications that Christ makes. You may, at another time, be in a different condition.

You may be in a trial about being loved with an everlasting love and Christ, sooner or later, will tell you that He loves you. Do not, if you can help it, confine Him to that Scripture, saying, say that word to me - "Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love". It may be that He will say it to you, but do not think He has no other way of expressing His love to you. O He may shine on you so gloriously, He may shine into your heart so powerfully, He may let you see, clearly see Him as pierced by your own sins, as that you could no more doubt His love to you than you could doubt that the sun shines in the heavens. What a falling down there is then. "On such love", you will say, "my soul still ponder". O the beams of Christ as they shine into the soul are beams of love. The wings of Christ are the wings of love. The truth of Christ is the truth of love. The atonement is love; righteousness is love; sweet peace breathed into your heart is love. The love of Christ - it is a communication. Sometimes when you are afflicted He will let you know that your affliction is a sign of your sonship, a token of your sweet relationship to God. "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons". Therefore "happy is the man whom God correcteth." O sinner what a word for Christ to speak - "Happy is the man whom God correcteth" "Therefore my son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him", the very thing we are apt to do. O but is it so? Does the Lord Jesus chasten us? Does the Father use a Fatherly rod upon us? There are communications. Sometimes He will speak a word that will be a word of strength to a sinner. He will own you. Tis wonderful and beautiful and very effectual to help when Christ owns a sinner. "If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small". And Christ might strengthen you by such a word as that; it may fall into your heart as if you were hearing Him say

When the work of grace is done

Partner of My throne shall be

O what a great thing it is for Christ to speak something, some promise, some precept, some admonition, something to encourage you, something that will be better to you, even though it has a bitterness in it, than His silence. This is the glory of the city - she has her Lord with her, her King in her. In the midst of her, her Prince, her Priest, her Prophet; her King with her. "God is in the midst of her". Then you find in this city, streams. "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God". Can the flag grow without

moisture? Can you grow without water, the water of life? Can you be refreshed without mercy? Can you grow in grace without faith? Can your faith grow without nourishment? How is it my friends that a poor sinner who has been like a withered creature for a time finds that he grows as the lily? The lily flourisheth in moisture, she spreads her roots. God's people are to be as the willow by the watercourses, drinking in of the river, and so flourishing. "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God". And these are some of the glorious things that are spoken of her. And another thing is this, she has all the wealth of the King. All the riches of grace, the riches of righteousness, durable riches, she has. Everything that love and wisdom and power could devise and give, this city of God has. Whatever the Lord Jesus is as the Lord Jesus, He is for His people, and the whole world belongs to the church. No man is to glory in man for, says the Spirit by Paul, "All things are yours whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or life or death or things present or things to come, all things are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." Do you need more grace than you possess? "He giveth more grace". Are you in the dark? He is the Sun of Righteousness. Are you feeble? He is the mighty God. Are you lost? He is the Saviour. Do you need a Priest? He is the great High Priest of your profession. Do you need deliverance? He is a mighty deliverer. Are you ignorant? He is sent as a leader and a commander to the people and to teach them the good and the right way. Glorious things. And this is one of them, namely that God, in Christ, has made an unalterable covenant with and for them, and has confirmed it with an oath that He will not forsake them. If the ordinances of heaven shall cease to be, if the sun shall cease to shine, if the moon give not her light, if the stars fall from heaven, then this people may cease to be My people. You find the Lord speaking to this effect by Jeremiah because He made with them a covenant which should not be broken. "My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of My mouth". And the covenant runs in a most merciful manner, in these terms. God, speaking to His Son, says My Spirit which I have put upon Thee and My words which I have put into Thy mouth shall not depart from Thy mouth nor from the mouth of Thy seed nor from the mouth of Thy seed's seed from henceforth and for ever saith the Lord. This is the covenant that is ordered in all things and sure, that covenant of which you may sometimes be led to sing as did the Psalmist, saying - "Although my

house be not so with God yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation and all my desire though He make it not to grow."

And one more word ere I close concerning this wondrous city. This is said - "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His . And let everyone that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity." The seal of God is to be put on the foreheads of all His people, that is to say it is to be in their hearts sealed up unto the day of redemption. This blessed seal can never be broken. It is the knowledge of God, the intimate, absolute knowledge of God, of all His children. "The Lord knoweth them that are His". Says Christ, in another way, speaking of the same truth - My sheep are in My hand. No man can pluck them out of My hand. My Father is greater than I and no man can pluck them out of My Father's hand. The old creation was soon broken to pieces; this shall never be. The old creation soon lost its beauty, and its glory; this abides; this shall stand for ever. The Lord knoweth them that are His; having this seal, this blessed seal of His great and intimate and absolute knowledge of them. "Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God." And how long is this to go on? When shall this cease, this glory cease? You find in the Revelation, in the chapter which I read (21) there is no end to it. The city came out of heaven from God and you find she is in heaven with God. No end to it. There is a beginning, there is a beginning to vital religion - the new birth is the beginning - but there is no end to it. Heaven is the glory that awaits all who are born again; there is no end to it, my friends. God will shine for ever and ever; no night there. Eternal day, eternal peace, eternal joy, and eternal happiness; an eternal song. There is a spirit in every good man, every one born of God, that is in a certain way and sense restless and will be restless until it enters into bliss. There is a rest of faith in the soul, there is a peace in the heart, and in the conscience at times, and the sinner says - I have enough, enough for my title, enough for my present happiness, but even then there is in the same person a spirit that cannot rest, never will rest, till it rests in the bosom of eternal bliss. Dr Owen speaks of this when he says, it is difficult for a child of God to repress the wish to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. I feel sometimes that spirit in me and particularly with the thought and

hope that what I am so plagued with will be for ever removed from me and the indwelling of sin I shall know no more when I reach, if I do reach, heaven. O, it is an attraction, I believe, to a mind, a spiritual mind, a great attraction that there will be no sin in heaven. Its being will be obliterated, destroyed. I thank God that sin and the sinner may be separated and will be separated and are separated in God's purpose and shall eternally be separated when time shall be no more and the sinner shall be with the Lord for ever and ever. O may the Holy Spirit open the riches of grace and show how that all the glory of the Church is derived from Him who is her Head, as all the honour and all the wealth and all the beauty and all the life and all the happiness of a bride, she derives from her husband. I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife, and that sight he got when he saw the city, the holy city, descending from God, descending out of heaven, having the glory of God. Do you see any beauty in the truth that there is a Church, a living Church? Do you see any desireableness in this glorious city, so as to wish to be a part of it? Do you see anything in that city which has a street of pure gold as it were transparent glass? If you do, one effect of that will be you will pray to be part of it, to be incorporated into it and to have that made good in you that was made good in the Ephesians - "Now therefore ye are no more strangers but fellow citizens and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." My dear friends, we are living in a dying world, we are living in an awful day. There is talk about the church and the world becoming one, a new world being made, while all the time that talk is being indulged in things are getting worse and worse, and we see the most awful blasphemies; we hear them on every hand. Popery, ritualism, spiritualism, rationalism, higher criticism and all sorts of things and these pretend, each one, to be a part of the church. O but what a destruction awaits these things, a destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. But there is a family on earth whose Father fills a throne. There are poor sinners today on earth who sigh and cry for the abominations that they possess and which yet they hate, who long to be justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who cannot be satisfied with anything short of an interest manifested to them in the Person and work of Christ, who desire to have in them the Holy Ghost, to wear a

robe of righteousness divine, and to be plunged into a fountain of infinite merit, to be spotless and blameless, holy and without blame before God in love. That family is called the city of God. Of that city glorious things are spoken. Loved of God, redeemed and purchased by the blood of Christ, quickened by the Spirit, clothed in a divine robe, God says of His Church, she is all fair. He longs to dwell in her and does dwell in her. He has said - I have desired it. It is My dwelling place for ever.

AMEN.