

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday morning 8 May 1921

PSALM 87 v 3

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city  
of God

I like the first sentence of the little heading of the contents of the Psalm - The end and glory of the Church. It is a true description of what the Psalm sets forth particularly in the first three verses. There are, in the Scriptures, set forth two creations. The old creation, of which we have an account in Genesis, had its glory. It was commended by God Himself as you read that when the Lord saw all that He had made He saw that it was very good. It had the stamp of God's own hand upon it. It had a perfection after its kind, it proclaimed His invisible things, even His eternal power and Godhead. No man, looking on creation, can be innocent if he does not see and glorify God therein. But that creation was soon spoiled; in respect of man it was ruined. It had its foundation in man's moral nature and the moral law which was given to man expressed the will of God, the commandment of God concerning man's life. Man was created for God; his chief end is to glorify God. The will of God in the law written in the heart of man is the foundation of that creation which means that God was to be worshipped, loved and honoured above all else by His creature, man. This foundation is destroyed; it was destroyed in the nature of man by sin. The heart is turned aside and instead of being pure and simple, instead of being devoted to God it is the habitation of unclean things; turned aside, full of cruelty, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. That is the best that can be said of man's heart, and God Himself has said it. You might be offended with me if I said it of myself to you, but God has said it of you. "The heart" - not this man's or that man's - "the heart", expressing the whole of human nature in every man, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it", but God. This foundation is never to be repaired. It is a fruitless task on which many enter when they seek to improve themselves. Tis good that God has left some little bits that are not utterly depraved in respect of

conduct among men. We have love, human love, called the best rag of fallen humanity. What would the world be without it? We have morality. O I wish everyone here may always be moral, if nothing more. You may do good to men if you are moral. You may greatly benefit your neighbour and be a blessing to your country, but rest not there. This old, this ruined foundation is never to be repaired. But there is a second foundation, or creation, mentioned in the Scripture. God mentions it by Isaiah as a whole. Be glad and rejoice in that which I create. I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. (Isaiah 65 v 18). The Apostle Paul expresses it particularly when writing to the Ephesian Church he says - "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". And in the same chapter he says - "For ye are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This is a creation; this is a wonderful creation. The first mentioned was never designed by the Creator to be immutable. Man was created and had given to him a standard of conduct, but he was not made infallible. He was not conformed in that first estate of his. But this new creation is infallible, rendered immutable; immutable by God's decree, immutable by His gracious and powerful working. Now this second creation has a foundation, and this foundation is on the top of the mountains. All created good in human nature, all strength of human nature, all knowledge of human nature, simply as human nature - above all that is the house of the Lord established, and I take it that that expresses the purpose of God to bring the wisdom of man to folly, reduce it to folly by comparison with His wisdom in building His church on His own foundation. And of this Church, this new creation, God has spoken glorious things. Man would not say much of the Church. Fallen man looks upon the Church of Christ with contempt. The men of Christ, the heavenly men, are set for signs and wonders to be spoken against. The sect that worships God according to the Spirit is everywhere spoken against. The Apostles and all who followed them were counted as the offscouring of all things so that the glorious things which are spoken of the Church of God, the city of God, are spoken by God Himself. May the Lord give us grace and wisdom to take a Scriptural and experimental view of the city of God.

In the first place we must notice her foundation. His foundation, God's foundation, is in the holy mountains. Isaiah tells

us that the house of the Lord is established on the top of the mountains and the foundation is wonderfully praised in the Scriptures. Glorious things are spoken of it.

First of all let us look at it in the purpose of God. He purposed to have a new creation that should abide when the old creation shall be dead and the Church may be truly said to be established upon God's purpose and decree. The devil shall not have all men; sin shall not reign in all men. All men shall not be swallowed up of ruin and perdition and the curse of God. Blessed be God, there are some people of whom He has purposed that they shall be His, and He will build them on the foundation of His own choosing and manifesting. If you begin anywhere short of the sovereign purposes of God with respect to the Church, you begin fatally short. Nothing can bear the weight of the edifice that God will build for His own glory in the salvation of the elect but the eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Himself. O, the glory of this. It bears immortal souls. All the weight of their souls, all the weight of their interests which are everlasting, this foundation bears - the purpose of God. And it is expressed in the Scriptures by the love of God. God is love, and He loved His people from everlasting. What was said to an individual is true of all the saints - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "In this was the love of God manifested toward us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us". Now this is the beginning, if I may say that word respecting that which is eternal, in the purpose of God.

The second thing for me to name is the foundation that has all that I have said in it. The foundation - it is not only that decree to save, but the Man in whom that decree is, Jesus Christ, and here what a field faith has. May that faith of God's operation be in our hearts and be directed to Him who is God's foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." All that is necessary for salvation is in Him, and in speaking of Him I would notice first of all the sending forth of Him by the Father. The eternal Father has one only Son and that only Son He freely gave. But

God, alone, could not save sinners; therefore this Son of God must become Man and we have here the mysterious, the blessed incarnation of the Son of God. "In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law". O, beloved friends, the greatest, the most glorious, the most mysterious, the most loving manifestation that God has made, can make, ever will make, of Himself, of His love, of His purposes of grace to His people, He made when He sent forth His only begotten Son to be the Saviour of the world. The constitution of Christ's Person is the mystery of mysteries. We read of the Church that she is the ground and pillar of the truth, and that without controversy, in her - that, I think we must regard as being the intention of the Spirit there, because everywhere else the incarnation of the Son of God in the Person of Christ is controverted - but in the Church of the living God that is and will be without controversy held. Yes, you who are taught of God will hold that truth without controversy. You may be tempted about it, but you will hold it. It may be snatched at by Satan, as if he would snatch it from your hearts, but you will hold it. You will be brought to fall down and say in your spirit

Bow down sense and reason  
Faith only reign here

O, the wisdom of God, and the love of God and the power of God as exhibited in the constitution of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You sang the second hymn, the hymn I love and you love no doubt some of you

A Man there is, a real Man  
With wounds still gaping wide

This Man is true almighty God, and almighty God and the Man Jesus Christ are One Person. In this day of apostacy, in this day when it seems as if Christ is to be all but universally trampled under foot, and His gospel despised by men who name His Name and are called His ministers, not to speak of the profane world, may it be given to us here to hold fast the truth of His incarnation, His sacred eternal Deity, His pure spotless humanity, making One Person only and do beg of God beloved friends, all of you who have faith, that He would

continually manifest to you this Person, that your faith may be strengthened in Him, that you may hold Him fast as the beloved of God, and the beloved of your own souls; as He in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, in whom the Father's good pleasure is, and in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. None but Jesus Christ, none but Emmanuel can do you good. None but that blessed One can be a foundation for your hope. None but Christ can sustain the weight of your immortal soul and remove your guilt and take away your sin. Christ is believed on in the world, as the Apostle Paul says, believed on in the world. May we be of that blessed party that believes on Christ. That is the first thing. "On this Rock will I build My Church". Whom do men, guessing about Me, conjecturing and wondering about Me, say that I, the Son of Man, am? Well, the disciples gave Him the result of what they knew. One said this and another that. One thought He was John the Baptist risen from the dead and another that He was an old prophet. But when they had answered His question, then said the Lord to them - "But whom say ye that I am?" Are you better informed than the men who are making these mistaken guesses? Do you know who I am? And we may, by God's help, apply the question, Whom do we say that Christ is? "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?" The people of whom Christ asked that question said, the son of David. But, said the Lord, if He is David's son, how is it that David calls Him Lord, saying the Lord saith unto my Lord sit Thou on My right hand. What say your hearts? Who is Christ? Whence came He? What is His Person? What about His Name Emmanuel, the Name of Jesus, of His characters, of His offices? As you think of Him in your hearts so are you. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he". And as you think of His Person, so you are before God. If you think kind thoughts, great thoughts; if He is beyond your utmost stretch of thought; if, in your vision, He is almighty God; if, in your vision He is very Man; if He is One Person in those two natures and if you cleave to Him and look to His blood and His righteousness, well then you are a Christian. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he". He may often feel a devil, and yet, thinking of Christ as the One who can save him, he is a Christian. He may fear he will be an infidel but, cleaving to Christ to save him from infidelity, he is a Christian. He may feel full of all kinds of sin, yet cleaving to Christ to deliver him, he is a Christian. Let us proceed to notice some things respecting this Person as first He is a

Substitute. This is most necessary. We are sinners and it does not stand in the nature of God to forgive sin without a sacrifice, a substitute. We are debtors, and it is not in His nature to forgive sin without payment. Justice demands payment. Therefore Christ became a substitute for His people that He might deliver them from their sins. It was a great experience that Paul had in his own soul when he said of Christ "Who loved me and gave Himself for me". And when it comes to you like that in the power of the Spirit you will see something in Christ indeed. Now a work of grace in a sinner brings him to this substitution of Christ. What is a work of grace? A work of grace is very much in mourning. Mourning over what? A revealed Christ, Christ pierced. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced". That is a work of grace. People may live in the heavens, in their feelings or their talk, and have no grace in their hearts. Grace brings its possessors into the dust and there they gladly and tearfully and mournfully and hopefully look on a pierced Christ, and He becomes their hope. The substitutionary work of Christ is a blessed thing for faith to contemplate. All manner of sin is to be forgiven; all manner of sin. I think the Lord's kindness in such a Scripture is very great, for He knows the manner of sin, the various manner of sins that we have committed, the various kind of sin that we have in our nature. Some things we have done, it may be this morning, some sins committed while we were walking here. O, the various sins, but the substitutionary work of Christ embraced them all, took hold of them all, atoned for them, removed them, left not one of them. What a wonder and this is connected with our subject. This is the thing to notice what Christ is, not only in His Person, but in His work. He was a substitute; He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Now, beloved friends, there is this then to be particularly noticed in the foundation. It is a glorious thing that, as done, when He laid the foundation. "Behold" He said by Isaiah, "I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone". This is the stone of Israel of which Jacob spake. Blessing Joseph he wished that the arms of his hands might be made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. Thence is the stone and the shepherd of Israel. This is Christ; this is the stone that God has laid in Zion for a foundation. Then of that stone it is said "a tried stone, a precious corner stone". "A tried stone" tells us of His suffering, suffering through and from

imputed sin, suffering by the law of God, suffering the curse of the law, suffering death in its extremity. This was the trial that Christ had. "A tried stone". Tried by men, but that was little. Tried by the devil; that was little comparatively. Tried by God, His Father, when He chastised Him and put Him to grief; that was the trial. Then it is said "A precious corner stone". "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". What connection is there there? Why, unto whom coming, ye also as lively stones are brought and built upon that living stone Jesus Christ. Unto you that believe on that living stone, Jesus Christ, He is precious. A precious corner stone that bonds the building together.

Then we have in the next place to consider briefly that Christ, who died, now lives. He is a living Christ

A Man there is, a real Man,  
With wounds still gaping wide  
From which rich streams of blood once ran  
In hands and feet and side

Tis no wild fancy of our brains  
No metaphor we speak  
That same dear Man in heaven now reigns  
That suffered for our sake

He is in heaven - blessed be God for the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ - raised by the power of God, seated at the right hand of God. Now, beloved friends, here is the foundation, God's foundation, above mountains, on which foundation shall the Church be built. "On this Rock", confessed by Peter, "will I build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Let us try in the next place to just notice a little about being built upon it, for, as I have often said to you all true doctrine issues in true experience. It is intended for this. Now to be built on Christ is an unspeakable mercy. To whom coming as lively stones ye are built upon that living stone, Jesus Christ. And the Apostle Paul in the Corinthians says - "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Christ Jesus." A foundation is intended for a

building and as is the building so the foundation must be. You can dig out the footings for a cottage in a short time, but if you are going to build a large house or a large building for some purpose, the foundation must be according to your design. The footings for a cottage would not bear a large building. God lays the foundation deep, then He brings the people to build upon it. We have a building and a builder spoken of in the Scriptures, rather two builders and two buildings. One who hears the Word of Christ and does it not, he is likened to a builder who builds his house on the sand. It may please him much; it went up quickly. He little thought of the storm that was to come, the wind and the rain that should beat vehemently upon the house, but it came. The rain came and the wind blew and beat upon the house and it fell and great was the fall of it. Be careful about your building. The second builder and the second house we have in the same Scripture - Luke gives it to us and Matthew also - a wise man, who heard the Word of Christ, heard that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life, and he began to build. But how? First, by digging, and he digged deeply till he came to the rock. There is a great deal of digging to be done where human nature is. Its fair pretensions must wholly be given up. All the goodness and the wisdom and the power of men, boasted of, have to be got away like so much sand. God will have His people dig deeply and go beneath them and get to a rock. Their own rock, human wisdom, is no foundation for heaven's building. Human works are no foundation for a hope of heaven. Human power is no foundation. These, I say, have to be got away. And the digging means the conviction of the Spirit, the reception of the truth, the opening of the truth, the showing to a man what he is and where he is, so that his faith casts away those things, yea it casts away the man himself, in a sense. He is a lost man. He has been brought to dig and dig and look and examine and he becomes at last a lost man, and then he reaches the Rock, he reaches Christ. Christ came to save the lost, and I think that that, though it looks so easy to believe, is one of the hardest things you will ever come across in your experience as the Lord may be your teacher and your Saviour. What, who doubts that Christ came to save the lost? Well, I will ask, who in this congregation believes it? Who half believes it? Who half believes it? Lost, why you will have to lose the greatest part of your religion some days, and lose all your strength and it may be God will see it necessary that you should lose your experience and be a poor



sinner, vile beyond expression, weakness itself, bondage and blindness and ignorance and darkness and death and pollution, and nothing else, nothing better. And then, without a rag, without a shred, without a thread, without strength, without goodness, without wisdom, Christ will be to you the only ground of hope, the foundation, the foundation. Other, God will not have. And here you will find God will give you a caution as you are building. If any man build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. You build by faith on Christ's merit, that will stand. Build on His wisdom to guide you, that will stand. On His power to hold you up, that will stand. Build wood, hay, stubble, some endeavours, some getting better, some conquest obtained over some sin, and a looking for a respite and rest and that sin not to come again, that is wood, hay and stubble, and some temptation will come and burn it up. You will suffer loss, but you will be saved so as by fire. Glorious things. Here is a foundation and here is the lost sinner, and the Holy Spirit comes and takes that lost sinner and lays him on Christ. Why, you say, what is the man to do? "Ye are God's building; ye are God's building". O, what a mercy to be laid on this foundation. God laid two things on Christ, first the sins of His Church and then He laid His Church on Him. He will lay two things in you. First conviction of your sin and then Jesus Christ revealed in you and you will build on Christ revealed, and a great wonder it will be to you. Now what are the glorious things spoken of this foundation then? Why the things that God has spoken about it first. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". O what pleasure the Father has in the very bottom and foundation of the new creation. The Father is pleased with this solid foundation. He is pleased with the work of Christ. Yes, this pleases the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs, it is written in the Psalms of the sacrifice of Christ. This pleases God. He took no real pleasure, only a typical pleasure, in the many and constantly repeated sacrifices of the old dispensation, but a real and everlasting pleasure He found and has in the offering, the one offering of Jesus by the sacrifice of Himself. There are glorious things that are spoken. Christ spoke the most glorious thing of this foundation when He said "On this Rock will I build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Pope, O what Popes have fought against it. Popery fights against

it, men fight against it, the gates of hell hold counsel against it, but none of these things ever move it, nor shall they ever move one single person who is built upon it. And the Church speaks wonderful things about this foundation, glorious things, and some here have done it. We sing sometimes

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand

That is a glorious thing to say, honourable, very honourable, and glorious means that, honourable. Honourable things are spoken of this foundation. We sing sometimes

Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head

They must be honours, and immortal honours, that you will put on Christ when, realising Him to be your only foundation, you boast of Him. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord". Glorious things then are spoken of the foundation on which the Church is built. Now I have only dealt with that part this morning. You know I am rather fond of bottom, good bottom, work because I know - you all know, of course, naturally - that good building must begin at the bottom and be good there. So let us, as the Lord may help us, look at this first, the foundation. Your hope can be no better than its foundation. Your religion can be no better than its foundation. If the foundation is good then your building on it, as you build gold, silver, and precious stones, will be good and abide and surely it is a great mercy to be concerned about the foundation for the day is coming when a storm will come, winds will blow from every quarter. Winds, I say, will blow from every quarter, rains will descend in torrents, and what then? The house will be tested and if it be founded on a Rock it will stand, but if you have not digged deeply and have not reached the Rock, but have built on sand, then your building will be destroyed. May the Lord give us then, earnestly and anxiously and prayerfully to look at the foundation.