

SB
4.63

4397-2031
La P812

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

2031

72

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 26 November 1927

REVELATION 1 v 17/18

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right-hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death".

God's dealings with men in Jesus Christ are salvation. Men's meddling with religion may end in perdition. It is a terrible thing to be religious without God. It is a wonderful thing to hear the voice of God in your soul. The Lord Jesus is the speaker in this, so great a text, the speaker in this wonderful chapter. He tells us an amazing truth, namely that He, Himself, had received a revelation from His Father. He is speaking here, when He thus speaks, in His mediatorial character, and in His Kingly office. He, made a Mediator; He is called God's King. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion". The mediation of Christ involves the whole of His wonderful Person - incarnation, obedience unto death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Do not separate Christ from His work. Do not draw fine distinctions with respect to His Person composed of His divine Person and human nature. Scripture, holy Scripture, speaks of Him as One. He received, in His mediatorial character and His Kingly office, a revelation, a revelation of things which must shortly come to pass. And if you meet Plymouth Brethren, and others who tell you that Christ is coming, and must come immediately - and you will find certain passages in the Epistles of Paul which would seem to sanction that - just tell them this, that in the first century after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, He got this and said this to John - things which must shortly, speedily, come to pass, and from that day to this they have been coming to pass and they are coming to pass still. Be not moved, says Paul to the Thessalonians, either by spirit or by letter, as that Christ's coming is to be immediate. Things which must shortly come to pass, I

say again, have been coming to pass ever since this wonderful letter, epistle, was written, and they are still coming to pass. He said to His disciples as He was about to leave them - we have it recorded in Matthew - "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"; therefore go and preach. O ministers have a King over them, a life and a Saviour in them. Omnipotence supports them, heavenly teaching fills them with what they need. Gospel ministers have almighty power beneath them and about them, and we have it here in this wonderful Book. And after his letters to the seven churches, we have, in the fourth and fifth chapters, what may seem to be, perhaps, a preface to the whole of what follows. "Blessed is he that readeth". How little have some of us read this Book, and less still have we understood it. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." Blessed is the minister who reads it and the people to whom he reads it and who may have given to them, as well as to himself, an understanding. And these seven letters were written to seven churches, which may represent the state of the church of God from that day to this and to the end. The faithful witness, Jesus Christ, tells churches of their faults. You can hardly bear a friend to tell you your faults. I should need a great deal of grace to bear a person telling me my faults. But if the Lord Jesus comes and tells me where I am wrong and tells you where you are wrong, then we shall listen to Him if we belong to Him and "where the word of a King is there is power". Did He ever tell you, dear friends, of anything wrong in you? See if you have heard Him pointing out to you some wickedness in your heart, some error in your life, some false judgment that you have made. It is a great mercy to be cared for by the Lord Jesus so as that He will manifest His jealousy. I would be thankful that the Lord Jesus is jealous. Has He shown His jealousy over you? Has He ever resented your departures from Him? your unbelief of Him? your hardness of heart? your readiness to turn aside? Do thank Him if He has. O, He ought to be thanked by us when He is so kind as to be jealous of our poor love. Blessed be His holy Name if He has been so jealous of us as again and again to say to us - you are wrong; you are wrong. This is not all, though. If you have any good in you He will tell you of it and praise you for it. He will be sure to acknowledge your faith and your hope and your love. He will never forget your labour of love toward His Name and to His people. Why, the Holy Ghost was so careful to encourage His people that He inspired Paul to say this: "God is

not unrighteous to forget your labour of love which ye have to His Name". Think of it; the little love you have got, the poor, feeble feeling of affection to His Person and His Name is so pleasing to Him that He regards it, as it were, and says I will never forget it. Why, the first love of Israel, the covenanted nation, pleased Him and when that nation left that love He told them of that love. "I remember thee", said He, "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." And if you have ever gone after Him He wont forget it. He will be sure to tell you one of these days that He remembers that kindness that you showed to Him when you preferred Him before the world. It is recorded of Mary that she made a good choice and He confirmed her in it. "Mary hath chosen that good part", that one thing needful, and so she shall not be deprived of it. I confirm it to her; I confirm her in her choice. And when the Lord Jesus spoke to His servant John, and told him to write to the seven churches, John, hearing the voice, and feeling the majesty of it in his soul, said: "I turned to see the voice that spake with me". There is an attraction in the voice of God; in the voice of Christ there is an attraction. If you hear it you wont need that I should explain that attraction. You will say, I understand it. If you are in the world, away will your heart go from it. If you think of gold then it will become tinsel. If you are pleased with the gaudy things of this world then they will lose all that gaudiness to you, and you will say, I turned to see Him and again and again to listen to what He has to say. What a difference there is between a form and, not much knowledge perhaps, but a God-given knowledge. And here, by the way, I may just say a word. Do not stumble at the quantity; look at the thing. If you know a little you will yet know more. And this Jesus Christ lived a poor man, a broken hearted man, and His Father in the Covenant came to Him - pure, innocent, gentle, harmless, loving - His Father came to Him, that great Man, and brought all the sins of the elect people and put them on Him, "made Him to be sin". O, the load; if only mine's so great, how huge the heavy load of all. Infidelity, pride, vanity, worldliness, love of gold, idolatry, and every sin, of the person to be one with Christ, every sin taken from that person and laid on Him, and He bore the heavy load. Religion, where real, has this great matter in it, sense of sin. Then comes the great truth, that this Lord Jesus bore that person's sin in His Own body on the tree. This

Jesus was tempted of the devil, was hated of men, was falsely accused, had His judgment taken away from Him in the day of His humiliation; was taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain, and yet no man took His life from Him, as He Himself declared: "No man taketh my life from Me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." And He died; He died a voluntary death. We shall die of a physical necessity; He did not so die. We shall die of some disease; He did not so die. We shall die because we are sinners, and God has sentenced us to death because of sin. He died a voluntary death; He felt the curse, He endured it. The waves and billows of God's anger rolled over Him. "And when He knew in Himself that all things were now accomplished, He said, I thirst". Vinegar was given to Him. Then He said, with a loud voice, not weakened by any suffering, "It is finished", and dismissed His spirit. He knew in Himself that all things were accomplished, the load was gone, the frown removed, the curse was exhausted. Justice no more oppressed Him nor squeezed Him; Justice no more pierced Him. He knew, by the removal of those pains and that anguish, and that curse, and that burning, that all things were accomplished and then, by His Own act, He dismissed His happy spirit and entered into rest, and this is the Jesus of whom we were now reading in those blessed chapters, the 4 and 5 of the Revelation, exalted above all principality and power, having all power in heaven and earth given to Him. O, think of it, dear friends, in your weakness, in your readiness to fall and faint and give up; think of it. There is One in heaven who cares for you, watches over you, and says : Fear not; I am the first, the first-born from the dead; I live. Happy is the man who has Jesus for His help, as it is written in the Psalms "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God", which made heaven and earth, and Jesus made heaven and earth. What a happy person is that sinner. You will remember, those who were here, that last Wednesday evening I brought before you the resurrection of Christ, and spoke about that Scripture, the last verse of the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, which chapter I read. I do not think we ought to put that chapter in the cemetery and leave it there. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Now it seems befitting that I

should, as enabled, bring before you that same Jesus, that same Jesus who was crucified, who died a voluntary death, and was buried and was raised again from the dead, and exalted at the right-hand of the Majesty in heaven. There He is in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns - indicating His now mediatorial and kingly power and authority - and having the seven Spirits of God, the Holy Ghost, in all the perfection of His gifts and graces. And now let us, by the Lord's help, look at this. He said, in the eighteenth verse, to John, "I am He that liveth". I am the living One. Our life is a borrowed life; His is essential. He is God; we are of a day; we are but of yesterday; we know nothing; our foundation is in the dust. He is the living One; so the word means. I am the living One. This points to His essential Being. My friends, when we worship the God-Man, we worship the Almighty, and if the beams of His Deity should shine into our hearts through His humanity, we shall perceive the solemnity with fear and trembling, with awe, with confidence. We shall perceive that we worship Almighty God; worship God here. O, believer, what a God you have, a lovely, gracious, pitiful, merciful, compassionate, Almighty God in our nature. And this tells us this, that, as He is infinite, no change can come to Him. He changes in His manner of dealing, but there never can be a change as to His Being. He seems to change, does He not? to some, when, instead of smiling, He frowns; when, instead of blessing, He withholds a blessing; when, instead of, as it were, sensibly and visibly guiding and helping you, He is far off, and you say: The Comforter which should relieve my soul is far off; and when, though you have had answers to prayer, you come to this, to say: "When I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer," and your heart says, and the devil says - and the two together make a bitter business of it for you - There is no help for you; there is no help for you in God. Then may faith be drawn out and enable you to say, "He changes not". My soul through many changes goes; His love, because His Being, no changes knows; cannot know a change. Whatever has a change has a death. Change is a kind of death. If you change from adversity to prosperity, you die to adversity. If you change from prosperity to any trouble, there is a change. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and today, and for ever. "I am the living One." Cast an anchor here, dear friends; cast an anchor in the risen Saviour, the Almighty God, Jesus Christ; Jehovah Jesus. "I am the Lord, I change not". What a

word for John, poor John, lying as dead at His feet. What a word for him to hear: "Fear not"; all that has died in you, as it were, is your corruption. "Fear not"; all that has died in you, as it were, is that weakness that belongs to your nature, that weakness induced by sin, that weakness that arises from your fear; that is all that dies. And, says the believer, when he gets this voice, I am glad that died then, though there is a resurrection. There is a resurrection alas, but he says I am glad I know what that dying means now. "Ye are dead but your life is hid with Christ in God". Hold this, my brethren; look to this, follow this, this great truth. I am the living One, the only living One. We have no life of our own. If we have His life He gives it out in that measure that shall glorify Him and profit us, but we have not the stock. You are but a branch; He is the root.

And the next thing - "And was dead". Was dead. How could He die? He died for this reason, that He had imputed to Him what deserved death, that made death inevitable. The inevitability of death, Jesus well knew, when He consented to be made sin; nothing surprised Him. O, what a solemn thing to contemplate, the Holy One of God consenting to be made sin, to be obnoxious to divine Justice, to be under that inevitability, that inescapable curse that made death a necessity. He took on Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. Think of it, my friends. If we had never sinned, obedience would have been our delight, and our life; no death could have come. Mortality came by sin. Sin has made us mortal, sin digs our graves, sin is corruption. But, though Jesus knew no sin, and did no sin, He consented to be made sin. I do not understand that word as I would. It is a mystery before which faith stands and looks and gazes and meditates. Made sin, constituted sin. So made, so constituted sin, that it became His holy, just, loving, eternal Father to punish Him as a sinner. May we be kept from presumption in even thinking of this. "And was dead". The ever living One was dead. And this is the only way by which you, O, my friends, by which I, can escape death. O, the glory of Christ's death in the eye of faith. "Was dead", that you might live. "Was dead" that by that death you might live unto God for ever, and with Him. "Was dead", separated from life for the moment, that you might never be separated from life. Death, what a solemn sound it is. What an awful sound to guilty souls - death. Perhaps some of you would rather not

retain the knowledge of God. It was so of old. Because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge God gave them over to a reprobate mind. O, sinner, if you would fain get rid of the very sound of God's Name, if you would fain get rid of the very thought of the Scriptures which reveal God, if you would fain get rid of the thought of eternity and of the judgment that is to come, looming in the distance, God may give you over to a reprobate mind and never deal with you till you die and appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And what will become of you then? O, think of it. If any of you are in that case, that you would rather not retain God in your knowledge, you would rather believe in evolution, and any other "ism" that may be presented to your carnal mind than believe in the living God, God may just give you over to a reprobate mind. May not that judgment overtake any of us. Jesus died; death came to Him. He loved His Father and obeyed His Father. He loved His people and died for them. He liked to retain God and did retain Him. I speak of the Man Christ Jesus. "Was dead", really dead. That sacred human form became a corpse. Literally, actually, Jesus, united to the eternal Son of God, died, gave up the ghost, was taken down from the cross, a corpse; laid in the grave, a corpse. There is a mystery in it; there is a mercy in it; there is life in it; there is righteousness in it; there is justification in it; there is the glory of God in it; the highest glory that Deity will ever show of Himself to the eyes of His dear people in heaven; all, all, will be found in this, and by this, death of the Lord Jesus. "And was dead". Bless the Lord Jesus for being dead. Thank Him for His voluntary death. Let us praise Him for going to the cross. Let us bless Him for giving up His soul, pouring it out unto death, and actually becoming a dead Man, a dead Lord. Go to His grave, dear friends, see Him there; pure, knowing no corruption. See Him there, and there, as you, by faith, see Him, you will see the Lord of life. You may hear the angels say - "Come, see where the Lord lay". Look into that grave and see a pure Man, without any corruption or death that can injure the soul and hold the Person. O, happy, happy man, who believes to the saving of his soul in the death of Jesus Christ. It was obedience in Him to die; He was obedient unto death. It was an act of obedience in Him to die. It will be a necessity in us - not an act at all in us - when we die. In Him it was an act of obedience, therefore, infinitely meritorious, pleasing to His Father, satisfying to justice, opening a way and a vent for the love

of God to come to poor sinners. I would like to live by this death. I believe I do and I believe some of you live by this death and we hope to live through eternity in this way.

"And behold I am alive for evermore". Very significant is the word of Peter. He said "God loosed the pains of death for it was not possible that He", Jesus, "should be holden of death." Death siezed Him. Because His Suretyship was for sinners, whose bodies must die, therefore He, in His very human nature, must die, that through death He might deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage. But now He is alive. The law said, as it were, to Him, come forth from the grave. Justice united in that voice. Love and mercy came, and truth came, the whole gospel, as it were, went to the grave, and opened the door and called forth that mighty One, Jesus Christ. And now He says, "I am alive for evermore". In His mediatorial, His Kingly character and office, He is alive for evermore in heaven. Let us look a little at this life. The Apostle Paul was inspired to write to the Hebrews thus: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them", for them who come unto God by Him. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." The living Saviour. I wonder how many of us have felt, or may be feeling, to have that word in us, in our feelings - "uttermost". Gone as far as you could go, wandered as far as you could wander, sinned as much as you could sin, done evil as you could do, sinned with both hands, and, as it is in Isaiah, "as it were with a cart rope". (Isaiah 5 v 18). Hated God, hated His ways, hated His Word; did not want Him, did not want to have a thought of Him. Now, convinced of that, you are subject to many temptations, to many gloomy thoughts, to very solemn and serious conclusions. You may say, it is a bad case, mine, a hopeless case. Whoever got to heaven who sinned as I have sinned? Well, I am not afraid when I hear such things from people. Many and many a soul is in heaven who thought he must sink into hell, and I am hoping to go to heaven, and I thought once I was sure I should be in hell when I died. You may put limits, but there are no limits to omnipotent love, no limits to the precious death of Jesus Christ, no limits to the grace of the Holy Spirit who is sent to quicken and teach and comfort poor sinners. You may set limits. Who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle? Why, you do when you say this cannot be, and

that cannot be; when you think your sins are too black, too many, too mighty, and have been too much indulged. Who would set the thorns and briars against Me in battle? What does He say? I would go through them; I would burn them up. Your objections will be burnt up but not you, yourself. O, said the Lord, of that man: "Let him take hold of My strength and make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me." "Let Him take hold of My strength". What is that? Jesus Christ. He is the Strength of Israel who will not lie; He is the power of God unto salvation; He is the precious Saviour. He sends out His words, His gospel. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them". Isaiah was a great preacher of the gospel, and having spoken of the Saviour, of the Father imputing sin to Him, he says then: "He shall make intercession for the transgressors." Why? "For He bore the sin of many". O, my friends, I was going to say to you, do not be afraid of being dumb before God when it is guilt that makes you dumb. When it is some sin, perhaps some particular sin, that makes you dumb, do not be afraid. But why should I not be afraid? Because there is One in heaven who opens His mouth for the dumb; who opens His mouth and pleads righteously and effectively for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. May His blood open your mouth of prayer, and I am sure you will never have an excuse then, but you will have praises. O, look to His precious blood.

The blood of Christ, a precious blood,
Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not,
And reconciles the soul to God,
From every folly, every fault.

That is the first observation concerning this word. "I am alive for evermore".

The second is this. He said to His dear disciples: "Because I live ye shall live also." You shall have tribulation; you shall go through deaths oft; you shall despair even of life in some way; you shall again and again be afraid with amazement; but fear not, "Because I live ye shall live also". And there is another word which I would tie to that, this namely, "If I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Earth is not our home; it is not good enough. There is

no purity in it to make a home for the saints. This is not your rest. And I would say, it is not big enough.

The God of spirits only can
Fill up the vast desires of man

Heaven, where Jesus is; Heaven, where the throne of the infinite One is; Heaven, where holiness reigns, and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands and thousands of angels and of saints you will find; this is the home He says, where I am, in the land of extensions, as the word is. The land which is very far off is the land of extensions, extensions of beauty and of glory, unthought of here, inconceivable here; these, these shall be known. He says, I live in heaven, and I have undertaken to bring you there, where I am, a mighty conqueror, you, kings and priests shall be with Me. O, what a heaven awaits us. Is He not beautiful in these words? May His beauty be known, even be revealed to us. I shall be glad if the Lord will help me, to make Him attractive to you. I know infinity, I know holiness and justice and omnipotence naked, can be no attraction and no home for a sinful person, but I know that God in human flesh, the death of the Lord Jesus, and His beautiful righteousness can be the life and the rest, and Himself the very home of sinners.

"I live for evermore". And there is yet a third word I would name in this connection. It is written of Him that "He liveth after the power of an endless life." Now in that I would put this word. An endless life is an endless life because it is sinless. Sin put an end to our life in Eden. Sin writes mortality upon our being, our body, and the removal of sin means endlessness. Endless happiness comes first of all, endless happiness. And Jesus, having made an end of sin, liveth now after the power of an endless life. And the Apostle lets this out when, in the Romans he says: "He died unto sin once"; "He liveth unto God". As He died unto sin once, death can have no more dominion over Him. "He liveth unto God". I am He that liveth after the power of an endless life. O, dear, poor, tried creature, feeling death very much in your soul, go to this living Saviour. He wont repel, He wont reject, He wont upbraid you. He upbraids us for our hardness of heart, but He never upbraids a praying person, for prayer is His blessed gift. He will never get tired of listening to you when

you are asking for mercy and blessing and salvation; never. We get tired of asking, but He never tires of listening. Can you say, Amen, Amen; be it so. Does your heart say Amen to this word. Would you have Him live for evermore, and live for you and you live in Him, and live to Him, and live for Him, to praise and bless and love Him through eternity.

And lastly: "And have the keys of death and of hell", for men who know, who have been able to read the best copies and manuscripts, say that these words should be inverted. "Have the keys of death" that introduces men to this awful state and place. "Have the keys of death and of hell". And what is this for? Why did Jesus say it to a good man? Just look at it. Why did Jesus say this to a good man, who never was going to hell? Because this good man fell at the feet of Jesus as dead, and because he might fear, at that awful moment, when the flashes of eternal deity and glory fell on him, when he gazed and could not gaze, and fell as a dead person, then said His Lord and Saviour, O, but I have the keys of death; I open and no man can shut; I shut and no man can open. And it would say this, no devil can thrust you into death, no sin can thrust you into death. Jesus has the keys, that is the authority, the power. Fear Him who, after death, has power to cast into hell. And this may speak to some of us, for some of us may, even though we have lived a good many years in hope of the mercy of God, and with some little knowledge of Christ as we trust, we may fear this. What if we should be mistaken? What if the devil should have power? What if sin should have dominion? Many and many a fear of this kind may come into your hearts. But, says the Lord Jesus, sin is My servant, death is My servant. I command, I possess the keys. Spiritual death He opens, and says to a man in that state, come forth, and shuts that door, that gate of death, against the man, and he never passes into it again. And hell, hell, the second death, is cast into hell. The second death is that irremovable curse that God pronounces and inflicts on His enemies, and Jesus says to a poor, fearing sinner, I have the keys of this place, this state - for hell is a state and a place. As it is a state, it is the curse of God on the being of a man who dies in sin. It is a state, a condition. Do you fear it? Jesus has the keys of it. O, and when He says of a sinner, I bought him with My blood, that is as if He should say, that person shall never die. Because I live he shall live. I bought him with My

blood; he shall be with Me. Look at the dying thief. He had gone to the extremity; he could go no further. The law of the land said, no more sin against society. And now comes this mighty One and opens the gate of spiritual death and says to this thief, come forth. He gave him spiritual life. What an amazing act, was it not? And that is just the same in everyone that is born again in another manner; come forth, says He. Literally He went to the grave of Lazarus and said: "Come forth". And that will be the case when the great day of resurrection shall come and this mighty One shall descend with the sound of a great trumpet with the holy angels of God with Him, and He shall speak to the graves and open them all, and to the sea and command it to give forth all it contains of dead people, and they shall live. Well, dear friends, heaven is in this. "Have the keys of hell and of death". And no poor, trembling, sinner shall ever be seen by the devil to be thrust into death when Jesus said I have locked the gates of death against him; I have opened the gate of heaven to him, as He did to the thief, saying: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise".

Now may the Lord open this word where I have failed, and O, how I have failed, and do always. Where I have failed may He teach and make our hearts understand what this great thing is. Dear friends, there is a great One in heaven, a real Man in heaven, who once was here a poor, broken-hearted Man, whom men and kings and nations hated and still hate, and He died and He rose again, according to the Scripture. And He is in heaven, in the midst of the throne of God; He has authority there; all power to send angels to look after His people, to send out His word to heal the sick, to give forth those sweet emanations of His glory, and express those great words of His love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". He is in heaven for all these purposes, and sometimes it is as if He comes out of heaven into the hearts of His people. Some of us know this. It has been as if He had come forth from heaven and said to us: "Behold Me, behold Me" and we have looked on Him; we have looked on Him. I have looked on Him, and I have loved Him, and some of you also have. We have loved Him and we do love Him, and, blessed be His Name, He wont let the gates of hell be opened to receive us if He has locked them against us. There is no place in hell for redeemed people, no place among the dead for new-born people, and Jesus will see to it. Blessed be His Name, He has not

left the matter in our hands. He has got it and He keeps it in His Own hands. "I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of death and of hell."

AMEN.