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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 20 February 1927

ROMANS 8 V 21

"Because the creature itself also shall be delivered
from the bondage of corruption into the glorious
liberty of the children of God"

This passage sets before us two things; first, the bondage of corruption, in which the creature is, for the time, held. The creature is the new creature - "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature". This new creature was made by God Himself subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. The second thing in the text is the prospect, not self made, but God-given, given by promise. The prospect is of one day being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty - or the liberty of glory - of the children of God. What a prospect! Lift up your heads O children of God for your redemption draweth nigh; it is nearer than when you believed. A prospect frequently out of sight by reason of the dense mists of corruption that come in between the vision of faith and that which is to be entered into one day. We have reason to rejoice though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations. The trial of faith is a precious thing, but it is a painful thing also; but, though it be painful, the issue is not doubtful. It shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. The whole of this new creation groans today. It is in bondage and hard labour; the labour, not of death, but of bringing forth; entering into that which is anticipated in the Scripture, and anticipated sometimes by faith.

The bondage of corruption; there is a distinction to be made, is made here, between corruption and the bondage of it. Corruption belongs to all men; the bondage which occasions groaning is known only to the new creature. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature". This new creature, according to the chapter we were just now reading, is a groaning creature. "We that are in this tabernacle

do groan, being burdened". There is a burden on every child of God; there is a bondage in his spirit. He cannot rise to where, and to what, he would. He is frequently held down; held, as Toplady well expresses it in one of his hymns - "Bound down by twice ten thousand ties". Wrath binds us; sin binds us; troubles bind us; fears bind us; temptations bind us; gloomy anticipations, never happily to be realised, bind us. And abominations in our hearts, which through mercy do not come out into conduct, these bind us, and this is the bondage of corruption.

Let us then look, as the Lord helps us, at this great thing. "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" Now take this corruption as being, first of all, our fallen nature, our innate depravity. Corruption here then is nothing less than that inborn sin that every man brings into the world with him. Born in sin, shapen in iniquity. This corruption is not felt by those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The pharisees said "We never were in bondage". Of course they were not, for they were dead. They were self-righteous; they had a righteousness which was not sufficient, of which the Lord Jesus speaks, saying, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom." They said they never were in bondage. Happy the man who can say, through grace, "I am in bondage". I am not what I would be. I am not in those things I would be in. I am in bondage; this body of sin and death. If you take the Apostle's exercise and look narrowly into it, you will find that grace has brought you, who have the life of God in you, into exactly the same trouble, exercise, and bondage. "The good that I would I do not; the evil I would not that do I". So he came to this "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death". This is bondage. When you seek the Lord, it comes and, as it were, puts its vile hand on your mouth, and on your heart, to keep back these fervent cries for mercy that the Spirit inspires. When you read the Scriptures it comes and tries to blind your eyes or divert your thoughts, and carry you into some vanity. When you would do good in any particular way, then it comes and tries to turn your feet out of the way of peace and of righteousness, into some wrong thing. When you would eye the Saviour, then it would put an idol before your eyes and bid you worship that. When you seek the God of salvation, then

the enemy may come and say, worship me; I will give you such and such things. This bondage is felt by every child of God, more or less. As life is active in him, so is bondage felt by him. It is a bondage of our native corruption, our inborn sin, called "the law of sin in our members". It is a bondage, in the next place, to some sore afflictions, The whole of God's creation, new creation, has affliction. Peter says to those of the dispersion, "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world". You will find a community in affliction as well as in grace and love in all the Lord's people. It is a common thing to the saints to be afflicted in their afflictions. God knows what we need. He knows how to clip the wings of vain desire; how to put our feet into the stocks of some affliction to keep us from gadding after vanity, as we would naturally do. How He does this you know in your own cases. But there is a bondage, there is a corruption in us, and this rises, but God sends affliction to keep it down, keep it from prevailing. There is a bondage of ignorance in us. We do not always know what the will of God is. We do not always understand His blessed Word. And, through ignorance, we turn aside into many wrong things, and this binds us. There is a bondage to temptation sometimes. Temptation is that that the enemy puts before the mind, suggests to the mind, dangles before the eyes, and seeks to bring us into some practice of sin. He may tempt you to infidelity, and it may be that some of you would never think of - yea, you would rather pray God to keep you from - uttering the horrible thoughts that now and again are cast into your mind; unwelcomed, but they are there. O the awful thoughts against God; sometimes against His Word, sometimes against His providence; why He does this, why He allows that. How could a good God permit such and such things to be? How can a wise God be ruling where such utter confusion to-day is? And these temptations are very abounding. They come very close. They come to you, to your own person, to your particular case. Why has God allowed this? Why has He permitted that? And you cannot fly away from these things as if they were not. You cannot say I am not going to take any notice of these things. They are with you, in you; they follow you, they beset you, they whisper, they howl, they fight, and God only knows how some of His saints suffer in the way of dreadful temptations. If these things were alone; if they were nothing but what we see and feel within ourselves, what gloom, impenetrable gloom, would fix upon our minds.

We should see nothing but death, confusion and everlasting ruin. But there is something, yes, there is a prospect which, as I said, is not our own, but God given. We are sufferers, but we are to be delivered. "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God".

Now take first this indwelling sin, this law of sin which is in our members; take it in two particulars. First take it as to the guilt of it, guilt which is on the conscience at times; guilt that depresses you, that makes you feel just a bit of fuel for hell fire. Guilt that has respect to the law you have broken, to the God against whom you have sinned. Guilt you cannot wash away, cannot forget, cannot get rid of; it holds you down. Now in this, there is a two-fold deliverance. First a deliverance through the blood of Jesus Christ speaking peace in your conscience - this the Apostle speaks of in the Hebrews. "If the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God". Now whenever a person has forgiveness spoken on his heart and justification brought to his conscience, he is delivered from that corruption. It is, for a time, in his experience, a foretaste of heaven. The sinner can sing

Beneath His smile my heart has lived
And part of heaven possessed

No better heaven can be had on earth. O to be justified freely from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. This is the blessed deliverance, entering into the liberty of the glory of God. It is the glory of God to put away sin, to forgive His people, to conceal a matter, to hide from His own view for ever the sins of His people. "I will forgive their sin and remember their iniquity no more". This is His blessed word, and of this the Psalmist sings - "Blessed is the man 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". Now the new creature enjoys this. It is, by the sweet power of forgiveness, carried up into heaven, as it were; breathes the atmosphere of sovereign love

and goodness, and the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ has the powerful effect of filling the conscience with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. But this is not the uninterrupted experience of all who have it. Clouds come and hide from the view of the sinner the gift of God. Sin comes and again makes his conscience guilty and burdened. So it is only for a time that this is had in this life; but O what a forth-breaking there will one day be, when the sinner who has had this on earth shall enter into it in eternity, and never again be defiled, never again have any guilt on his conscience. This is the liberty of God's glory that awaits the creature. The creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And this is that, that known by precious faith and experienced here in a measure, is longed for by all who have it. No man can ever bear the glory of this in heaven who has not some measure of it on earth.

Take, in the second place, sin with respect to its pollution and its power. Its pollution keeps the sinner away from God. Its power moves the sinner in a wrong direction, carries him into forbidden paths. Now, in this respect, the creature is again and again delivered from bondage. You know what I mean; those of you who have been blessed with the presence of Christ, tasted that the Lord is gracious, had access to Him through Christ by the Spirit, know what I say is true, when I say that, under such favour, the soul flies away from sin, does not commit sin. "He that is born of God sinneth not". His desire, his longing, has some realisation. He gets away from these vile thoughts, that hardness of heart, that dreadful ingratitude, that wandering of the desire which, at other times, he has been so afflicted by, and he finds himself favoured to walk up and down in the Name of the Lord. "I will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in the Name of the Lord". If, my dear hearers, if any of you live and die ignorant of this deliverance, you will never walk with Christ in heaven. You will never stand on the sea of glass; you will never walk those blessed streets of the new city that John had shown to him. But if, for a little time now and again, you are blessed with gospel liberty, with holiness of heart, without which no man shall see the Lord, then there has been in you, in that particular time, a deliverance from the bondage of corruption.

These two points are sufficient to fill a man's ministry and to occupy the saints as long as they live. Sin, as I apprehend it, in these two particulars, is the one thing that burdens, hampers, deceives, blinds, carries us away from God, and induces great hardness of heart and ingratitude, and these, when in any measure we are delivered from them, are indeed gone as to the guilt and the power of them. Now look at these two points, take notice of them, watch your spirits in respect of them. How do you stand with respect to the guilt of sin? Were you ever delivered from it? Did you, at any time, get a blessed deliverance in your conscience from dead works by the blood of Christ? Then you have had, in that, an evidence of being a new creature in Christ. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature", created by God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God ordained you to walk in. A new creature, created in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of Him that created him. That is the first thing. It is what every soul in bondage to guilt longs for, cries after. It is a true and painful bondage, bondage to guilt. It goes with you everywhere; it is on your conscience; it is, as Job expresses it "My transgressions are rolled and come up upon my neck". And, rolled by God's hand, and bound and put on your neck, you cannot get away from it. It is a yoke to hold you down, a burden to press you into despair and hell for ever and ever. And feeling this, the desire, the groaning is this "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord, for it is great". He is a greatly favoured man who can go back to a time when this burden was taken off his conscience and when he could say - I'm clean; I am just, and God bore witness with his spirit that it was so. Then look narrowly into the second point - Have you always been the servant of sin? "Know ye not that to whom ye obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness". Did you ever obey the Lord Jesus? He says, "Look unto Me and be ye saved". Did you ever obey Him? He said "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". Did you ever walk in that? He said, "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee". Did you ever do it? He said, "Love your enemies", "Pray for them that despitefully use you". Did you do it? He said, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God". Were you ever in that spirit? Yea, He said

"Take no thought for the morrow" Take no thought as to what you should eat, or what you should drink, or wherewithal you should be clothed. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you". Now our corrupt nature says just the opposite. Look after yourself. Make hay, as they say, while the sun shines. Do not let any chance pass you. Look here and there. And as to your enemies, you say, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Did you ever get from that power, that awful power? That was true deliverance from the bondage of corruption, but not full. True, but not full because it knows, alas, many an interruption; many an eclipse as to the sun to our souls. Many a day we may stand in the congregation and cry that we have not the sun. I went mourning without the sun. Yea, and the soul says: "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?"

Now there is also deliverance from time to time from the bondage of corruption in respect of affliction. I put affliction here, because although an affliction is not a corruption, we are brought into corruption. That is, the worst of our nature often comes up and binds us with respect to affliction. Rightly viewed, affliction is seen as coming from God. Wrongly viewed, it is seen as coming, according to vile nature, from some chance, or some enemy, something that we could have avoided, something that need not have been. Rightly viewed, as Job viewed Him, it was the Lord. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away". A wrong judgment proceeds from ourselves; that binds us. A wrong judgment of His hand, that is a not viewing of His hand in the light of faith, will bring us into sore bondage. This is an evil, and I must bear it. O what a favour it is to be brought to Job's state of mind - It is the Lord. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away". Though Job afterward said many strange things, and seemed to be the servant of an impetuous spirit, yet that stands - he was a perfect man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, and he justified God. How do you stand? How have you stood in respect of affliction that has come upon you? Have you seen the Lord's hand in it? Have you submitted to Him by faith? Have you said "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". Felt as the Psalmist felt when he said "I was as a dumb man in whose mouth are no reproofs". Felt as David felt, when in affliction he said, "Let Him do with me as seemeth Him good" As long as that spirit was in your heart

working and prevailing, you were delivered from that bondage; a corrupt judgment and a corrupt conclusion; a wrong judgment and a wrong conclusion. When we view affliction from our own standpoint, then, as far as lies in us, we injure God, injure His holy character and His infinite wisdom. But when, by faith, we view the Lord as too wise to err, too good to be unkind, and also see ourselves as much needing affliction; view ourselves as needing the rod of correction, then we come to a right place. O happy the man that bears the chastising stroke of a wise God. Happy is the man who is delivered from a foolish, carnal and corrupt judgment of God in sending affliction. He is delivered from that. So, of temptation, I may say the same. When temptation pursues us, confuses us, burdens us, deceives us, we are in grievous bondage to it. But when we are enabled to walk in the word of the Apostle Peter - "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". "Be vigilant, be sober, knowing that your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour", and when by faith we can say to the enemy "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan" - then there is a liberty, and it is a sweet liberty. When you find your soul flying away as it is now delivered from the snare of the fowler - "My soul", said the Psalmist "is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler" - that is very sweet. It is beyond all expression good when it is experienced. It is a part of heaven. Now this, if I may speak of it as this temporary deliverance from the bondage of corruption, is but a forerunner, a harbinger of what is to come. The whole creation groans and waits for the redemption that is coming, that draweth nigh. A few words on this. It is beyond what we can really entertain or realise, but the Scriptures do reveal it. Take now the deliverance from guilt. One day you are quite free from it; another day you come into fresh contracted guilt. Some vain thing has injured you and turned you aside, but it has not taken away your interest; it has not broken the covenant of grace; it has not plucked you out of the heart and hand of Christ. "My sheep are in My hand; they are in My Father's hand. No man can pluck them thence". What then? The sweet liberty that was enjoyed for a few hours of deliverance from guilt is to be extended through eternity. It is to be extended through eternity. Nothing of guilt or defilement can enter heaven; nothing of that kind. But when God has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, as He has done on the cross, then that guilt that plagues, that burdens, that

puts a sinner down into a low place, shall one day for ever and ever be removed from him, and he shall walk in the light of God's countenance without interruption throughout eternity. What a prospect that is. O mourning saint, lift up your eyes to this God as set out before you in Holy Scripture - "Thy people shall be all righteous. They shall walk, every man, in his uprightness"; that imputed righteousness and uprightness that the saints have, they shall walk in for ever and ever. Some walk with Christ here in white. What is that compared with walking with Him in glory for ever and ever? They shall dwell with Him. Christ has prepared a mansion for them. He says, "Where I am there shall My servants also be", and they shall have no guilt. So, with regard to the power, the defilement of sin, this is frequently interrupted. Frequently do those who have had the blessing say, again and again, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When they say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ", then they have before them a prospect, and what a prospect. "Far from a world of grief and sin", one day they shall be. I think it is one of the sweetest anticipations that a child of God can ever have and entertain in his heart, that he will one day be delivered from these distractions, these swervings, these turnings aside, these backslidings and that hardness of heart to which he is now subjected, and shall be free for ever from sin in every shape and form. There is one deliverance we shall never get in this world. We shall never get deliverance from the being of sin. But when in heaven, if we get there, we shall be delivered from the being of sin. The root here is always sending out new shoots; no matter how cut off they may be, new shoots come, but there will be no root there; for ever delivered from the body of sin and death. Here we worship occasionally; there without interruption for ever. Here we live by fits and starts; there no interruption, no failing at all. Here we see through a glass darkly; there, face to face. Here we know in part; then we shall know even as we are known. What a wonderful prospect then you have afflicted saint. May the Lord give you to see it; that there is, there does remain, a rest for the people of God. A blessed rest from sin and so also from the enemy. The dwelling place of the Lord's people is this, the secret place of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty. And of that, we read in the Psalm, that no arrow, no pestilence, no darkness, no death, shall enter. There is such an immunity from all evil in Christ as that

the Psalm sets forth, that the person dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty is secure; secured from harm, secured from death; has an everlasting immunity from all evil. Felt now and again here, they are to be enjoyed to the full and without interruption. So the Apostle might well break out into that triumphant song where, as we were reading just now, he said, we are in this tabernacle now and we groan, being burdened. We do not want to be unclothed - no annihilation is desired by the Lord's people - but we would be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. God has wrought us for this, he said. "He that hath wrought us for the self same thing" for that habitation and that blessed place, "is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit". And then, from the enemy, that foul spirit, that subtle serpent, whose approaches we scarcely know or notice even, until we find ourselves injured in some way. Destroyed; as to the saints, as to his power, destroyed, as the Apostle teaches us in the Hebrews. He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage; in bondage through fear. But now there will be no more of this. God, defending Jerusalem against Senacharib said, "He shall not shoot an arrow into this city" and we may say the enemy will not shoot an arrow into heaven; never inject a vain thought, never a defiling idea into those who are in that blessed place.

Now says Paul here we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; the liberty of God's glory, the liberty of the glorious redemption of Christ, of the glorious righteousness of Christ, of the glorious grace of Christ, of the glorious love of Christ; and this glory and power awaits every worm of the earth. Worm Jacob, this is what is before you; this is what is before. A few short years and this little congregation will be numbered with the dead, but our precious souls, where will they be? Man dieth, he wasteth away, he giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Where do you think you will be? There are two places in eternity for habitation. Heaven, for all who are prepared for it. It is a prepared place according to Christ's word. "I go to prepare a place for you". And the people are prepared for it. "Thy people shall be all righteous" and a righteous man cannot miss heaven. And hell, that never ending woe of the curse of God; a

fire in the conscience, a worm in the conscience, never to be quenched, never to die. One of these two places will receive us. Think of it. One of these two places will receive us. Glorious liberty awaits the saints; endless punishment awaits the wicked. The wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God, and the saints have awaiting them a welcome into heaven. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world". And these two are mentioned by Solomon in striking contrast, in one short verse. "The righteous hath hope in his death. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness". The righteous cry, Lord take me in. How many saints have said, how long will His chariot wheels delay? How slow in movement. My soul would fly away into everlasting rest. But the wicked, he would give millions if he had them for a little longer time in this world. He does not want to go, but he is driven away against his will. He has to go to eternity. Is the new creature here? Yes, he is. See what awaits him. That deliverance after which he is panting at times, and sighing and groaning; into which he is labouring to enter. To labour here is not for death, but for birth into that eternal blessedness which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. Now may the Holy Ghost set these things on your hearts and on my heart with power, so that we may cry mightily to Him to save us from corruption, corruption of every sort and kind.

AMEN.