

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Morning
21st November 1926

Text: Romans 8 verse 30

Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

The doctrine of God in Christ Jesus is the doctrine of salvation, it is the doctrine that glorifies God, that sanctifies the Church, and which in the ungodly excites enmity. But in the godly it produces wonderful thanksgiving, and glory to God. This doctrine fills a sinner to whom it is revealed in power, with life and light, and the utmost amazement, that such a favour should come to him a sinner, and creates a union with Christ. The doctrine in the text, and the preceding verses has been likened to a chain, whose first and last links are in God, and all the other links also are cast around the Church to bring her ultimately into glory. This is a chain without a weak link in it, a chain of divine truth emanating from the heart of the ever blessed Jehovah.

It gives life, let down by the Holy Spirit into a dead soul, giving it eternal life, a call that is effectual so that there is no resisting or overcoming it, a justification that clears the sinner, and changes his state from that of a sinner to a person against whom no law or charges can come, that ultimately takes that sinner into the presence of his God and Saviour. What a mercy it is if we have received such a doctrine, in a right spirit. It may indeed be in the heart of a dead, hard Calvinist, and he may turn that grace into lasciviousness and say, even, that he may do evil that good may come. But Paul says, "And the rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." (Romans 3 verse 8). The grace of the doctrine, is what God gives to His children, and they hold this form of sound words in the Sprit's grace and power. It is no wonder, knowing, even the little we do of our own wicked nature, and the ease with which we let slip the best things through a failing memory, or worse still through having only a little faith. I say it is no wonder that we are exhorted by the Holy Ghost, to hold fast that which we already have, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 1 verse 13). and, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." " Timothy 3 verse 14).

It is doctrine which is unto godliness, that is it produces godliness when it comes in power. The Holy Ghost produces a godly life, a contrite spirit, a tender conscience, and a desire to honour God, which is not satisfied with anything short of the power to do so. We have been considering the previous verses (28th & 29th) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren." Predestinated not to let them live as they like, not to continue in sin that grace may bound, but predestinated them. To be conformed to the spotless image of His dear Son, Jesus Christ.

This morning we have the thirtieth verse, which is a wonderful summary, so to speak, of all the doctrines of grace. Showing the heart of God in a declared purpose, in predestination, whereby men are predestinated unto a certain state and position, and brought into a relationship to Himself. Cutting them out of the wild olive tree, by the operations of grace, and grafting them into that good, and fat root, Jesus Christ, their covenant Head, Lord and Saviour. My dear friends, you will never be solid, never be established on anything but sound doctrine. Sentiments, pretty sentiments, religious ideas, may please, in fact they do please some men. But those who know their ruin, who feel that they are in a state of condemnation in Adam and in themselves, need, seek and have no rest until they find themselves well set down in every divine truth. I have mentioned to you before, that advice which holy Mr Gifford gave to John Bunyan when he called on him. Mr Gifford was John Bunyan's pastor at Bedford, and the advice he gave to his hearers was this, 'beg of God to set you well down in every divine truth, for be assured that whatever you take on trust will fail you in the hour of temptation.'

Follow that advice my friends, follow it as God helps you. Look to the Lord to teach you the truth, and if it please Him to honour me, by enabling me to set the truth before you, in however feeble a manner, it will be a great blessing to us. Wednesday evening I noticed a little, particularly about the foreknowledge of God, that foreknowledge is the eternal privilege of God relating to certain persons, not the general necessary knowledge or foreknowledge that God has of all creatures, but the sovereign, loving approval of His people, as His people. His fore-knowing them not as coming to do good works, but as belonging to Himself, and as having given them to His dear Son to save. That is, as I apprehend, the intention, meaning or use of the word foreknowledge. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate." (Romans 8 verse 29).

And the Apostle Peter has the same order in his first Epistle, when he says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 1 verse 2). Oh did the Lord look with complacency on you and me in eternity, did He say of men and women in Brighton, who should meet at Galeed , such and such sinners I approved eternally, such was My foreknowledge of them, to be my own, I predestinated them to the adoption of children to Myself by Jesus Christ. And blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him. Well then we shall need eternity to thank, praise and glorify Him for so distinguishing a mercy. Now let me say here, that this was done by the Eternal God in His eternal mind and purpose, without any reference whatever either to good works, or to wicked works, in the objects of His love.

As it is said in the next chapter, "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Romans 9 verses 11-13). And that was that, the purpose of God according to election must stand. What has that to do with us ? what effect will this have upon us ? It means this, that however wicked we may feel to be, whatever sins we may have discovered to be in our hearts, whatever wicked thoughts have ever moved us in enmity against God, whatever things in us are contrary to the nature of God, they cannot influence this great matter of God's eternal choice of them. Oh convinced sinner, lift up your head, may God lift it up by telling you this great truth, that He did not choose you because He knew that you would be good. That He did not pass you by because He knew you would be wicked, but that of His own free and sovereign love He said, these shall be mine. Of this lump of clay I will make a vessel to honour.

Now this doctrine issues, and flows forth from the heart of God into a sinners soul in an effectual call. "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called:" There is a general call, by the preaching of the gospel which gathers people, a general call that has an effect on communities and nations. The general call came to England in the Reformation, it came to Germany under Luther, and to Switzerland in their Reformation under the ministry of Calvin, and a great call it was to those nations. Think what God has done to our nation in the general call by those reforms and then under the Puritans, what blessings He has poured upon us.

He has given us the Holy Bible, a wonderful gift, the secret of all greatness in the land, and we here as a congregation have this general call. As enabled I preach, and you come to hear but that is only external unless you are given a hearing ear. The Apostle Paul writes to the Hebrews, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is:" (Hebrews 10 verse 25). But this is also true, "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22 verse 14). What a solemn thing it would be if some in this congregation should be in that sad state. You will note it says many, not few, an effectual call is the work of the Holy Spirit, it reaches the heart and changes it, it renews the will and turns the feet to Zion's hill. It takes its beginning in regeneration, but regeneration and calling may be distinguished thus; regeneration comes to a person who is passive in it, he has no hand in it, nor wish for it, no knowledge of it, for it just comes to him unbidden and undesired. It is a mysterious act of the Holy Ghost on a sinner. The implantation of another life, different from his own sinful life, but I say he is passive in that. No man can ever say positively when the moment was, that God came and gave him that new life and new heart, it was a new birth. No man can tell at what moment this happened, and this may be a help to some of us. The change came, but we knew not how, like the seed and the sower. The farmer rises early and looks, and finds the seed starting to grow, he knoweth not how, then later it sprouts, then there is the blade, then the ear, then the full corn. So it is God's work, what a mercy it is to be born again. But that new birth is evidenced, and manifested by a gracious calling, which is such a mighty work of God in the soul, which turns the heart, the thoughts and the mind Godward.

Now this calling is in the scriptures, it is God's voice in the soul, and is called a holy calling. "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," (Hebrews 3 verse 1), this is the word used, heavenly calling, because it is a holy calling, and it is heavenly in its nature. It draws the soul of the subject of it to heavenly things. It brings the character of God into the mind and understanding, and shows the sinner something of eternity, the Eternal God and His blessed character. It reveals to the sinner, sin and its just desert, and hell as the punishment of sin. These things working in the mind by the Holy Spirit produce a change of thought, giving a feeling of apprehension at the holy nature of God and the nature of sin. This is the way I view conviction, you do not rise from a conviction of sin to a conviction that there is a God, but you rise from a conviction that there is a God to the knowledge that you are a sinner. And the more God's nature is known, the more sin is realised and felt. It is felt to be contrary to God, Oh what a good religion it is that begins with some conviction of the nature of God.

Some feeling that there is a God in heaven, against whom you have sinned. What a mercy if we believe there is a God in heaven against whom we have sinned. What a mercy if we believe there is a God in heaven, and that God rules over us, takes knowledge of our every thought, every wish, every motion of our minds, and knows perfectly what we think and what we feel about Him. What we feel about self, and that this is a call from the world, and a call to God. There is always this I say, there are two points and two terms in this blessed call, something from and something to, what a favour to be called by this heavenly calling. It is described by Peter, in the chapter I read just now as, "Through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1 verse 3). Or a call, by the glory and virtue of God, not to the glory and virtue of God only, but by the glory and excellent power of God. Called by the glory of God ? Yes, every operation of the Spirit of God in the heart has glory in it, and every operation has an excellency in it. Excellent power, an excellent effect in it, and you will find that to be so as God is with you.

As God is calling you, He will call your thoughts from the world to Himself, He will call your thoughts to Christ, as you are led to see your need of Him. He will call your thoughts to the blood of Christ, as that fountain that cleanses from all sin. He will call your affections to Christ as the only true and proper object of love, and call your thoughts and understanding into union with Christ, as that which alone can, dissolve union with Adam. He will call your thoughts and judgement to the righteousness of Christ, as that which alone can justify the ungodly. "Whom He called." Oh what a mercy this is, come my dear friends, see whether you have received this call. You may have to go back a good while, your memory may be carried back for many years, to a time when you saw the vanity of this life, and of this world. When you saw that nothing in this world could do you any good, you saw nothing in yourself that could bring satisfaction to your soul.

When you saw God, in His claims upon you, and that you could not meet these claims, nor even bear, in their naked glory, these claims, and that if He dealt with you under the law you must be lost for ever. All these attainments you may say are exactly as I have expressed them, but the substance of the thing is, to look at when you felt God's sacred presence. Perhaps sometimes in a room, or some place where you were favoured with a sense, an inexpressible sense, that there was a God over you, against whom you had sinned. And that if He called you to account, a strict account, you could not stand before Him. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand ?" (Psalm 130 verse 3).

This is a solemn truth, it is a wonder that this heavenly calling should have so much to do with sin, but it is so. The heavenly calling in a sinner has a great deal to do with sin, and to save from it. To convince of sin, to condemn you for it in the conscience, and to discover it as being in your nature, in your thoughts, to show that the thought of foolishness is sin, to show that jesting is sin, to show that a wandering mind is sin, and that a gadding spirit is sin. That whatever you do in unbelief is sin, and as this is brought home, the sinner becomes alarmed. What then am I to do ? and then, what must I do to be saved ? It is a serious thing to see sin in the light of a believing heart, and a coming punishment, but it is solemn indeed, to see sin in the light of God's holy nature, His revealed and holy law. Now some of us have to say this, that though in the beginning there was much indistinctness, much sin, much falling away, that after a few hours perhaps of serious solemn feeling and fear of condemnation, we have again become light and foolish, and conviction seemed to die away. Then they came again, and so up and down, there were these alternations. We have to look back and say, surely there were more signs of sin reigning, than of grace working, but as time went on, again and again, God put an effectual touch, darting in an effectual ray of light, moving effectually on the affections, drawing them to Himself. "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1 verse 9). This means being called to receive and partake of the benefits of Christ, the benefits of His Person as a Mediator, and the benefits of His incarnation.

It is very wonderful for one who has feared the Deity, and omnipotence to see that Deity and omnipotence in the Lord Jesus Christ. My words can do you no good without the Lord, nor can I convey to anyone a right impression of what I mean, but I distinctly remember when I saw that arm of omnipotence, which in its nakedness I feared, clothed in a body like our own. You are called to the fellowship of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to partake of the benefit of His Person, Immanuel, God with us. And though there may have been moments at times when you had no courage to kneel down before that awful God you believed in, there came a time when you saw the Mediator between that glorious Being and your soul, and you drew near to God in Christ. Called to that fellowship with Jesus Christ, called to the fellowship of His atonement, when you could plead it, believing that " the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (! John 1 verse 7). Now this heavenly calling is realised in some measure when that is the case, when without in the least mitigating your sinfulness, but rather exaggerate it, if it were possible in your confessions of your sinfulness to the Lord.

You found hope in His mercy by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now remember this, may the Lord help us to do what He says by Moses, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness." (Deuteronomy 8 verse 2). See how He led you on, by slow steps perhaps, but surely to the Saviour of sinners, and led you to see the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, to plead it, to wait on God for forgiveness. He hath called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, now this is the calling, look at the effect of it. Now the Lord said to Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." (Genesis 12 verse 1). That was God's word, it was effectual, what has it been with you ? Have not you had to leave something ? Peter said to the Lord, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee". (Mark 10 verse 8). What have you left ?

You had to leave the world, some companions, some friend or friends, some meetings, whether sentimental pleasant or social meetings. You may have had to leave a form of religion, perhaps being made to feel what an empty thing it was. Your language was, I cannot trust it, now you had to go to God, leaving the world in those particulars, leaving it in your affections, though your affections sometimes will be like those of Lots wife. "Let him likewise not return, Remember Lots wife." (Luke 17 verse 16 & 17). Looking behind and back still, you had to leave it, and said perhaps in your spirit before the Lord, I can go no more, keep me from it. I can no more do those things, save me from them, I must leave these things, help me to do so. If we are called there is an effect, it is not only leaving but seeking. "For he (sought) looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11 verse 10). Yes there is something set before us, something promised, something sought after with all the heart, soul and mind.

"Whom He called," He called to seek His face. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm 27 verse 8). and "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." (Luke 13 verse 24). The soul says, strait as it is Lord, bring me into it. Whatever stripping there may be necessary, which I may have to give up, lose or part with, help me to do it. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." (Matthew 7 verse 14). This will make you a marked person, you will be sure to be observed. Your family will observe you, if there is any change to be observed there, and it is a poor change if there is not. Whatever you may profess, they will be sure to observe you, and if you have been satisfied with a form of godliness without its power.

And are now wanting that power you will have, in a sense to forsake it. In a sense you may have to forsake those who are satisfied with the form, and follow after the power of God. This was Paul's case, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." (Philippians 3 verse 10). Who is before you ? after whom are you seeking to know, love, and embrace ? Who is the object of your faith ? Berridge says,

I seek and hope to find
 A portion for my soul,
 To heal a feverish mind,
 And make a bankrupt whole;
 A cup of blessing for the poor,
 That's free, and full, and flowing o'er. (Gadsby's 886 verse 1)

Some of the Lord's people have not much to forsake, being brought up religiously under the sound of the truth, and the form of sound words, and never having gone into the world. But there is one thing they have to forsake in common with all others: when a profane man is brought to the footstool of mercy; when a blasphemer is made to pray; when an unclean man is made to walk after holiness; and when a mere professor is made to seek to be a possessor; When the one brought up under the truth is convinced of his sin, they all come to one place, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9 verse 23). "For Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14 verse 27). All will come there, that is the solemn position, Christ or self but not both. Oh but this self, how it cleaves to us, to deny self is not to give away a little, or much of your substance, it is to deny those wicked thoughts, that inconsistent profession, that listless mind, that enmity, bitterness, and wrath.

To forsake, is to abandon, and self clings very close to us, and yet that is the thing we are called to deny. You will never take corruption into heaven, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Corinthians 15 verse 50). You will have to leave self, that wicked self, religious self, weak self, or strong self, ignorant self, or knowing self, for self must be forsaken. Now I have dwelt on this fully because of its importance, so many of us are indistinct, our religion is indistinct, our confession is indistinct, and our convictions are indistinct. If we are made wise, we shall find, that what we must have is a testimony from God.

We shall need more than seeking a little strength from convictions that we are right here and there. A testimony from God is the only sure foundation, to be able to say with Newton,

I once was lost, but now am found;
 was blind, but now I see. (Gadsby's 198 verse 1)

Or as the Father said of the prodigal son, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15 verse 24). Distant but now made nigh, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2 verse 13). A sinful wretch made happy in the Lord, by a testimony of an interest in Him. Now what will the Lord do with this person, this called sinner, for he is before God in his rags ? "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (Zechariah 3 verses 3 &).

Some here are in this state, and what will God do with such persons ? Such a person knows himself and what he deserves, he knows how he ought to be dealt with under the law, as David knew that according to the law he ought to have been stoned for his wickedness. But now what will God do ? Why, He will do this astonishing thing, "Whom He called them He also justified," Now the word justification is a legal term, it means that before any action, or trial can take place, a clarification about the sinner is laid before the court. While the sinner says I am guilty to the devils accusations, then another stands on his behalf, "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord which hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? But that is not justification, that is putting Satan out of the court. Justification is this, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And unto him He said "Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (Zechariah 3 verses 2 & 4).

Take his rags away and give him righteousness, then the sinner is justified, his state is changed. He is now a person standing before God and the angel with "a fair mitre on his head." And there is inscribed upon it Holiness to the Lord, for justification and sanctification are never apart as they are united in Christ, and so they are united in the sinner's experience. Justification then is the imputation to a sinner of the righteousness of Christ.

The making over to a sinner, of the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the removal from the sinner of his wickedness, sin, and guilt, and conveying to him a robe of righteousness. This makes him just in the sight of God, which delivers him from death. Righteousness delivers from death, what an amazing change this is, that God should be pleased to come into a sinner's conscience with that justification that removes condemnation from him. And he walks in the light of God's countenance, happy indeed is the sinner to whom this is conveyed by the Eternal Spirit. This is what the Lord promised concerning the Holy Ghost, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John 16 verse 14). Now here a sinner has a knowledge of God that amazes and humbles him, he says with Hart the poet,

What right can my tormentors plead,
That I should not be free ?
Here's an amazing change indeed !
Justice is now for me. (Gadsby's 151 verse 8)

Justice that stood against him, justice that terrified him, that now is on his side, it is now for him. As Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery, "Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ? She said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8 verses 10,11). Jesus also said to Lazarus, who was dead, "Lazarus come forth, And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go." (John 11 verses 43 & 44). Let him be clothed as a living person, and let not death cleave to him any longer. Give him that blessed change of raiment, that shall make him fit to stand with the princes of Gods people, and give him a title to the throne of glory, and heaven itself.

This is the blessed doctrine of justification, as this is known the sinner is free, as it is realized in a Church the Church stands before God accepted in the beloved. As you get it revealed in your own conscience you will understand a little of what it is to stand before the Lord and to walk before Him in the light of His countenance, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." Psalm 89 verse 15). And to find all your own person, even your strength to be the strength of the Lord. For, "to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isaiah 40 verse 29. Now I must leave the subject for the moment.

May the Lord give us to understand experimentally what it is to be justified.

Amen.