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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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ZECHARIAH 4 v 7

"Who art thou O great mountain, before Zerubbabel
thou shalt become a plain, and He shall bring forth
the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying
grace, grace, unto it"

This chapter tells us that God will be all in all in the work of grace; that "it is not by might, nor by power" that any spiritual work is wrought, that entirely, from first to last, the work is God's. The foundation is laid by Him, the building is carried forward by Him, and the topstone is brought forth by Him with shoutings, crying grace, grace, unto it. The pride of man will not allow this; man contradicts it; he cannot bear it. That his hands should have nothing to do with it; that his wisdom should have no devising, and no part in the architecture; that his strength should have nothing at all in it; this is more than man can bear. If we be in nature's state, that is true of us. We do not like, naturally we cannot like, that God should be glorified, that we should be humbled, that we should lie, as dead creatures, at the feet of Christ to be received by Him. But that is what will be in the case of every redeemed person who is quickened and brought under the power of the Holy Ghost. The golden candlestick in this chapter represents the church, the church of God. Her light comes from the two olive trees emptying themselves into the golden pipes, and when asked about this by the prophet, the answer was this: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel saying - Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts." All the light that ever is in the heart of a sinner, the illumination of his understanding, the guiding of his feet into the way of peace, all, all comes from the Lord. Does this suit? Does it appeal to that spiritual instinct that God implants in each child of His? Have we got that spiritual instinct that says, what God here declares, I love and desire to have an experience of? Mind this, true experience comes from God; true illumination is from Him. And then, following that statement, so acceptable to the people of God, that it

is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God; following this, we have this text. "Who art thou O great mountain?" Mountain in the Scripture means a kingdom, a power, a greatness, and in this sense the text means all obstructions, difficulties set in the way. Sometimes by providence, strange providence; God's strange work. Sometimes by the devil, sometimes by a carnal mind. In various ways there are mountains, obstructions in the way of the people of God. But the chief mountain in this day must be that that is called the law of sin in our members; a great mountain. Another mountain is guilt on the conscience, which none can remove but God. Another great difficulty and obstruction is the working of sin in our members and it is not by might, human might, nor power that this obstruction, this mountain, can be removed. Now, says God, to this mountain, to the obstructions, to the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of sin, the kingdom of the world: "Who art thou". Dost thou set thyself up against God? Dost thou think that thou art able to resist that mighty arm of God? Thou standest in the front of a worm, a poor creature, and thou dost frighten him, and, as it were, thou dost say to him, thou shalt never get by me. But "Who art thou?" - a question - "O great mountain". God never belittles any difficulty, any mountain that may be before and obstructing the way of a child of His. He does not say it is little when it is much. He does not say the mountain is low and small when it is great, which shows that we should never belittle any obstruction, or difficulty, or sin, or guilt, or temptation. We shall not get through by belittling things that stand in our way. We shall not be conquerors by saying there is nothing to conquer. When God says "great" of a thing, may we believe it. May we be brought into submission to His Word, and may we be led to feel that He intends us, by that word "great", to feel our weakness. If we do not feel our weakness, there is little, so to put it, for God to do; but if we do feel our weakness in particular things, feel that we cannot manage, cannot remove an obstruction, cannot rebuke a devil, cannot subdue an iniquity, then there is something for God to do. "Before Zerubbabel - a type of Christ - thou shalt become a plain." God is gracious in His word. He promises to level mountains. What we cannot put our hand to, He has but to say the word "Be removed", and it is removed. Or it may please Him sometimes - it does please Him sometimes - to give faith to say to a mountain "Be thou removed and cast into the sea", and it is done. That is a real experience; some here know it. There

has been a mountain. You have looked at it, fainted at the sight of it, and thought you would never get by it, nor over it, and God has given faith and you have said to that very mountain, be thou removed, and faith has got the victory. "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain, and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it"

Let us look a little, by the help of the Lord, at the mountains. There is the mountain of sin. Great is the sin of man, great is the sin of poor, tried Christians, great is their feeling of sin, rising as a mountain between themselves and heaven. How can they reach heaven with this, rising up to heaven. And they feel, many, many times, that this mountain is not to be removed, immovable; but God does not think so or speak so. He says, "Who art thou". He was speaking literally to Babylon, the mountain that destroyed the earth, and it shall become a burning mountain, and be cast into the sea. And the sin that we have which is as high as heaven shall one day be removed and become a plain, and it must be before Christ that this is done, and by Him. It is done in the first place by His death when He made an end of sin. That was the greatest act that was ever done by God, that ever will be done by Him, when He took sin, made an end of it by dying. When He uttered that important, that wonderful word: "It is finished". When "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His Own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit". What a levelling it is, a removal of the mountain out of the way, and there is just a plain, open, wonderful, glorious way, for a sinner to walk before God, and to reach God; feel His mighty love; to walk up and down in His Name. And all this was done by the Lord Jesus on the cross. It is done in the conscience by the mighty working of the Spirit. "Not by might" - not human effort; not by resolutions - "but by My Spirit." This brings in that wondrous and honourable and glorious work of the Holy Ghost in the conscience when He brings the blood of Christ. "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." There is something in experience very remarkable when this is done. The glory of Christ is great in this.

The glory of the Spirit of Christ is great in this; that what all the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer could not accomplish; when all the tears that were shed for sin could not remove it; when all the desires and efforts of a sinner in that direction could effect nothing; that then the blood of Christ is applied by the Holy Ghost so that the conscience is purged, really cleansed, and the sin that was too heavy for the sinner to bear, and too high for him naturally to think he would ever get by it or over it, that then this precious blood takes the whole of it away and purifies the conscience, purging it from dead works. Works done in unbelief, works done in the heart of a poor, wretched, fallen creature, these dead works are taken away, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps the heart and mind by Jesus Christ. Now if any of you have this mountain before you, may the Lord grant you may feel the power of that word: "Who art thou O great mountain?" Nothing can stand in the way of omnipotence in the atonement. "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain". And when you see how it can be done without you lifting a finger; how it can be done by one gracious word and touch of the Holy Ghost, then hope will rise in your heart, and you will say to yourself, I will wait on God.

There is the mountain of indwelling sin; that is very great. It is a terrible obstruction in the way to heaven. Everyone quickened and led by the Spirit knows that. It is a real obstruction. If you take the Apostle Paul in the Romans and see what he says about it in his own experience. The good that he would he did not, and the evil he would not, that he did. That he had a law in his members, the law of sin. When you consider and know your own souls, that the law has authority, commanding power, a rule, an influence, then you will see, and you know, that indwelling sin is a great obstruction. It may often stand before you as being between you and heaven. These vile affections, how they prevent you moving after God. These solemn feelings of enmity against Him, how they hinder you from loving Him. Unbelief, how it prevents you from overcoming by faith. And these things do constitute a most solemn and a very great obstruction or mountain. You cannot make it a plain. You cannot make it a plain. God must do it or it will never be done. "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." The experience of the Apostle John which was read just now in the Revelations, is a wonderful experience. "When I

saw Him I fell at His feet as dead". Dead to sin, dead to himself for the time being. "I fell at His feet as dead". Read it, read it, read it year after year, and you will never see Him without the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and when you get that sight of Him, then in your measure you will understand John's feelings. "I fell at His feet as dead", and this will bring you into some experience of being baptised into Jesus Christ. Many are baptised in water who never are baptised into Christ. But this baptism into Christ is by the operations of the Holy Ghost. That brings a person to know a little of what it is to be "dead indeed unto sin". He reckons himself to be so - "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God" - for God says to him: "I am Alpha and Omega". He lays His hand on him. "Fear not", He said, "I am the First and the Last. I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for ever more. Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death." It is one thing to see that in the Bible; it is another thing to have it in your soul. The old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts wont get away from you of itself; neither can you subdue it, nor get beyond this obstruction, this mountain, but the coming of Christ to you will do it. He does come to His people, though in this day there appears to be little of His coming. Observe this point then in experience, the power of indwelling sin; sin, a law in your members; sin, commanding you, ruling you, seeking to rule you in every movement, and then see your helplessness and feel it. Then is the time for Zerubbabel to come and level the mountain and make a plain way for you to heaven and you will see that thus, as long as you live you will have this law in your members, yet there is One who has undertaken to conquer in you as well as He conquered for you. And that promise to conquer in you is contained in the Romans where the Lord says: "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." That is to get the victory. Sin in you will always trouble you when you are in a right state of mind, but it shall not have dominion. You say, well but sometimes I am quite under it. "Sometimes" in this case, is an important word; it means "not always". "Not always", for Christ comes and works mightily in His people so that they overcome. "Who is he that overcometh the world" of sin in himself, "but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

There is a mountain yet once more to be named, or rather another

mountain to be named, that mountain that God permits to come and stand before His people, namely that subtle, wild, awful devil, who dared to tempt the Lord Jesus, and he dares to tempt every child of God.

"Say, could the tempter try
To shake a tree, so good, so green,
Good God, defend the dry.

We have great need for the Lord to come to us in this matter. You may fear - when under sore temptation, when the enemy, as it were, shows himself, when he may even proclaim himself god, the god of this world; when he may tempt you to worship him - how can I get through; how shall I overcome. He rules the world, he is the god of this world, how can I, a worm, expect to overcome? You cannot say to the mountain, be removed, unless you have great faith, but God says: "Who art thou" He is but a creature, he is but a creature. The Creator says, "Who art thou", and he sometimes is swiftly removed. The Light of Life shining, the Prince of Life and Peace coming, will remove this. All the obstructions that the devil can ever be to us, or place in our path to hinder us from moving Godward, shall come under the power of Him, of whom it is said: "God hath given Him a Name which is above every Name", and all power on earth and in heaven is given to Him. No devil can move without God's permission. No roaring lion can roar against a saint without God's permission. Then we have to look to this Mighty One to level this mountain, to remove this obstruction, and, as I said at the start, God here shows His determination to have the glory, "that no flesh should glory in His presence". He brings forth His righteousness for our rags, His precious blood for our purity, His good Spirit for our weakness, and His mighty power to remove all the difficulties and obstructions that may be in our way.

You take the mountains of divine providence, difficult as they are, and we are not likely to have fewer in this nation or in the church of God for some time. Great are the difficulties that are before us, but to walk before God with respect to them; to say feelingly by faith, "My times are in Thy hand"; "Thou hast redeemed Me O Lord God of truth"; to feel, as Job felt, when his calamities

came one after the other - "The Lord gave". I have thought that Job's case, that his faith in that instance, was very wonderful. There were the Sabians, the Chaldeans, the fire of God from heaven, and the wind of God blowing upon the house of his sons, and all his sons and daughters killed, yet he saw none of those things as it were. He just saw One, only One, and of Him he said in humbleness of mind, in true submission to God's will - "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord." Now whatever difficulties may be in our way, in our businesses, in our families, in our persons, or in the church of God, there is just one hand only, one Spirit only, one mighty power only - "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." This is a ground for faith, a wonderful ground for faith. If you can stand on this you will indeed be comfortable in your troubles; hopeful, notwithstanding your sinfulness and your sins, and quiet in your mind, notwithstanding all the disturbances that you may experience in providence.

"And He shall bring forth the headstone thereof", that is of the building, as we have it in this chapter. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; His hands shall also finish it." This is the building, as Paul says: "Ye are God's building". This is the great work of God in a child of His. He builds him on Christ the true and only foundation and here He says of this building, that Zerubbabel - Christ - shall bring forth the headstone thereof. We may be far from this experimentally and literally we may be far from heaven, though we are going there. We may be young in the way, we may have many difficulties to meet, many obstructions to say to us, you will never get there, but the day is coming when all these will be removed and it will be this - He brings forth the headstone, crowns the work He commenced, crowns all. "Having begun a good work in you He will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." This is the prospect that is before the church of God. Now we are discouraged; you may often feel greatly discouraged. The soul of the people was faint while they were pursuing, and you may just understand that; very faint in your heart. Shall I get well to the end? Shall I come honourably to my grave? Then many voices in your hearts may say, No. But in your discouragement, the Holy Ghost may turn your eyes and your heart to what is said of Christ: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have sent forth judgement unto victory". A great

word that. He, whom God has given a work to do; He, who did the work is now said to be God's Covenant to the people, and such is His power, such His love, and goodness, that He shall never give up. He shall not faint. The youths faint and are weary, and old men get faint and weary; faith gets very low, hope almost dies, love waxes cold, faint indeed. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way". But this stands up before faith sometimes: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." Our discouragements do not affect Him. They do not make Him say, this people will never get through. "He shall not fail". He is God. "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozra. This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength. I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Mighty in love, mighty in purpose, mighty in working to save the people for whom He shed His blood on Calvary. Therefore wait on Him. He shall bring the headstone. O will it not be wonderful to die in the Lord? I have thought today that will be a wonderful thing. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Then the headstone, the completion of the work of grace, shall go forth and in every instance, and the whole building, this shall be the word, "Grace, grace unto it". "Grace all the work shall crown". So the song is this - "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His Own blood and hath made us" - who were worms in our own judgement and feelings - "hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." That is to be the divine conclusion and the sweet experience of the whole church of God. Grace, grace in God. Grace in the Father, grace in the Son, grace in the Holy Ghost, grace in the heart of a sinner overcoming his sins, carrying on the good work. Grace helping, guiding, supporting, and supplying. Grace in every particular where needed. Grace in trouble, grace in temptation, grace to pray, grace to believe, grace to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Grace everywhere, at every step, and at the last, shouting in the church, shouting by every individual person thus crowned - "Grace, grace unto it". That is the prospect of you who are the people of God; that is the prospect. Darkness may come and you may say, I see no prospect. Obstructions arise and stand before you, and you say I see no way out. Zerubbabel does; that is sufficient. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known". So the work of grace is that glorious carrying out

and fulfilling of God's purpose, fulfilling of divine love and divine intentions of mercy.

Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days (Gadsby's 201)

May the Lord carry on this good work in our souls and give us to see that, although the whole world stood in the way, there would be no reason for despair. Rutherford speaks of seven deaths and ten hells standing in the way, but Christ is enough. "I am He that liveth". "I have the keys of hell and of death". What encouragement He gives in His blessed Word to His poor people, and the Spirit brings these encouragements from time to time in different measures into the experience of His people, so that they can only say, grace started the work, grace has come to my rescue from time to time. Grace has humbled my soul many and many a time. Grace has comforted me sometimes. Grace has strengthened me often. And so it wont be altogether strange - no, not at all strange - when the headstone is brought forth, while the church will say, this is what I have known in a little measure; grace is what I felt. This grace conquered me, this grace supported me, this grace humbled me, and it is complete. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." May the Lord bring forth this blessed truth into our souls and make it a living experience in us and glorify Himself in us.

AMEN.