

1397-7
La P 812

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Sunday morning, 11th. December 1927

Text: 1 Chronicles 21 v. 28

"At that time when David saw
that the Lord had answered him
in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite,
then he sacrificed there."

* * * * *

This word is cast in a scene of extraordinary sadness. The nation smitten by the hand of God, the pestilence had smitten and cast into death seventy thousand men. God will be noticed, and although when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will not learn righteousness, yet, says this great God, they shall fear, they shall notice. You will find it, - if you are deaf to one stroke, another will speak to you if you belong to the Lord. Satan, we are told, provoked David to number Israel. In the second book of Samuel, the account of this solemn circumstance is given, and there we are told that the Lord was angry with Israel, and he, Satan, moved David to number Israel. No sin, - no punishment. If you are clean, God won't deal with you as if you were unclean. It will be a mercy for us to have an eye to see, and a heart to feel, when the hand of God is upon us in any way. Remember, that it is not for nothing God frowns. It is not for nothing that He shows Himself angry with either a person, or a community, or a nation. And in the midst of this desolation, - think of it, the awfulness of it, the floods of tears that were being shed by families at this time, when a sense of the awfulness of Divine Majesty was upon the hearts of the people, - then David, the instrument of the sin, David was brought to this point, "I have sinned." A grand point to arrive at by Divine grace. Different from the wicked person of whom Solomon speaks, who having done wickedly says it is nought, and he wipes his mouth and says, 'What have I done?' (Prov 30 v 20). Mark God's dealings with you my friends, they are not for nothing. And "David saw", - God gave him a sight of, - the destroying angel, and he saw him with a drawn sword standing over Jerusalem to destroy it. The same extraordinary sight may not be given to you, or to me, but we may see by faith, the angel of the Lord and His sword. He is not a favoured man who does not see God in judgment. Do not think you-

are well, if you miss this sight. You have reason to bemoan your condition if you do not see the hand of God in judgment when judgment is about you. If there is no judgment, then there will be no sight given, but if there be judgment, and God should give sight to see it, and to see Him, that is mercy. David saw this performance. Can you follow him in his confession? And as David was so looking, and so confessing before God, then came a word to him. 'Tell him,' said God by Gad the seer, 'Tell him to go up to the threshingfloor of Ornan and sacrifice there.' Here came mercy, mercy's angel-form, mercy's loud, soft, beautiful voice, mercy's provision, - sacrifice. And David went out as he was commanded, and built there an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings and called upon the Lord, and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. Is there anything like this in gracious experience? Yes, every sacrifice shall be salted with fire, and when you, any of you, and all of you to whom God may give a sight and sense of deserved but not full judgment, only in measure, and gives us too a sight of His goodness in Christ, and the Holy Spirit comes down upon us to enable us to cleave to Christ crucified, and bears witness with our spirits as to the efficacy, the sufficiency, the blessedness of that everlasting atonement, then, there is the fire of God upon the altar, and at this time we have the text: "At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there."

What I would say, if the Lord will help me to say it properly to you, is this: that there is a place, a reason, why any plague and all plagues that befall us, though deserved by us, may be stayed. A smitten people, smitten individuals, smitten churches shall know what it is to get an answer, as David got, though in another manner, by which they will know that their confessions and their prayers have been heard and answered and then they will worship there, and if this that I would, that I do propose to you now, be opened to faith, it may be an instruction on our hearts for our encouragement, and for the glory of God. It is difficult, impossible, without the Spirit, for any man to say the thing that is right of God. How I have coveted, for years at different times, to have God's testimony in my heart and about me, that He gave to Job, He only knows, - to say, "the thing which is right" of God.

Think of it ... If you regard it, absolutely all you can say of God, is that that the Apostle Paul says, "Unto the ---- immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever." If you regard it relatively, if you regard it as related to some particular judgment and some particular mercy, then you may be sweetly able to say the thing that is right of Him. David said the thing that was right of God when he confessed sin. Hold to confession, hold fast to that. If you go to your grave with repentance, you will go well to your grave. Every Christian man is a confessing man. He must be, seeing that the Apostle says, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar", - if we say we have no sin, we make Him a liar. As He says in another place in His Holy Word, there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not. We must be always confessing sin. Gloomy?... I wish I were filled with gloom all my days, for I find that when liberty to confess sin is granted, there is a sweetness about it; there is a sacredness, a softness, and there is an acceptability in it, and men blessed with grace know that. Go on, my friends, confessing. Go on confessing all your sins.

Well, now let us look at this place, - I do not want to be digressing, - at this one thing: David saw at that time, a place, an offering, an acceptance. There, he worshipped. What is this in the gospel? It is nothing less than the blessed adorable Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus. The plague of sin, the plagues of Divine judgment, of chastisement, will never be stayed in any person, except here. This is the place, this is the offering, - Jesus Christ.

"Living tongues are dumb at best;
We must die to speak of Christ."

And yet, the Scriptures reveal Him, and as the Spirit reveals the Scriptures which reveal Him, to any person who is made a minister, that minister will be able at least to whisper some things and he may be brought to a contentment to preach, - as of the ability God giveth even though the ability hardly will amount to one talent, - Jesus Christ. What a Person! The Maker of all things, the Eternal God. I AM THAT I AM: inconceivably glorious, eternal, with no possibility of increase, with no possibility of decrease in His Divine nature and Person. And this Divine Person stooped infinitely, and came from the delightful, the eternal bosom of His Father, and

entered the womb of the virgin Mary, into that nature which was there begotten miraculously by the Holy Ghost. This is Jesus Christ. Your faith, if you have faith in Him, will see more than any man can ever see of beauty, of mercy, of love, of infinitude, of compassion, of pity, of suitableness; you will see more than any creature could ever utter, more than you will be able yourself to utter. Here is the Child born, and the Son given, having these names: Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, of whose peace and government there shall be no end. And He is sent of His Father, sent as the Servant of His Father; and He being sent, freely, voluntarily, comes and says to His Father, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, O My God." And He, this Apostle and High Priest of our profession, came into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, and put His neck under that yoke, and put His whole life into that service, and every thought that He had was given to that service; every step He took, was in that service; and every prayer He offered was in that service; and every act of obedience given, was in that service to which His Father called Him and also in that priesthood in which He was made a Priest, a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. Did you ever see this Person? His name is named on us as a congregation, but did we as a congregation, individually ever see this Person? O, of course we have seen Him in the Scripture. I know that. I did not ask it in that sense. Did you ever see this Person? How can you love Him, if you do not see Him at any time. This Person stood in the breach made by men, by the church. This Person with the yoke of the law on Him, obeyed and He made an end of sin. He finished transgression and He brought in an everlasting righteousness, and having finished the work His Father gave Him to do, and ascended into heaven, there He is now, seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven; there, our great High priest, He is ever living to make intercession for us. Now this is the only place, the only Person, where and by whom and in whom any plague and all plagues can be stayed, with respect to the church of Christ. May we be enabled to fix our gaze here.

It is necessary here to look at the plagues, the pestilence of sin. A smitten sinner; smitten in his conscience, smitten it may be in some providence; sensible of his alienation from God; sensible that only God can make him right; that only God can put

his sin away and make him fit to be the guest of God; sensible of this, seeing the sword as deserved, feeling it in its authority, its just claim, its just piercing; this person no matter how that he may be in a profession, comes to this: this plague in my nature, this plague in my conscience, this plague, it may be, on my person, the fruit of sin, this plague can only be stayed, stopped, removed, in this place. And does not this point out to us, the only way of salvation? If we get to heaven, we shall get there pleading this from the beginning of prayer to the end of prayer. From the first motion of faith to the last motion of faith, from the first glimpse to the last more clear vision of faith there will be this one thing that God will have us plead before Him - the Lord Jesus. This plague will plague every saint as long as he lives, spreading out sometimes like a leprosy to make him feel more and more loathsome. Then the Spirit will fix his gaze on this one thing, this one Person, who offered Himself without spot to God, and with respect to all the judgments of God on persons, on churches, there is just this same thing. A smitten person, a smitten church, can never be healed apart from this blessed offering upon which comes a fire from heaven to sanctify and consume. If you take these two things, what you feel in your own conscience, the plague there, and if you take what you may be suffering, may have suffered, and may yet suffer in respect of the dealings of God with you, you will find no ease for your conscience, no rest for your faith; no confidence as to the issue, but as you are brought to this one place; it therefore is worthy of all the attention we may be able to give it. The healing of a person, the healing of a church. And it is my purpose, as the Lord may help me to speak in His name, that none of you who may live to see darker days than this day, and heavier things than are now being experienced, shall say to me, 'You did not warn us.' I will, God helping me, warn you of a plague, tell you of plagues that may be coming and then of the only way by which plagues may be stayed. They may be in your own souls, they may be in your persons, they may be in a church. They may be stayed, - mind this. And this place of offering was extraordinary, which pointed to Christ suffering without the camp, for the tabernacle of the Lord which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering were, at that season in the high place at Gibeon where in ordinary circumstances David ought to have gone. In ordinary circumstances it was his duty to go there,

but now there was this extraordinary state, and God met it, and there, where the future temple was to stand, there, God would have David offer sacrifice, and it may be also as I have hinted, that the Lord, in this, pointed out that the Lord Jesus suffered, not in the way that men would expect, but in the way ordered. He suffered without the camp, without the gate of Jerusalem.

Now the healing. This is a great thing, a healed soul. Think of it. What is a soul healed? A soul forgiven. Having forgiven you all trespasses. That is the point, the point at which every child of God aims; that which he above all other things desires. Heal me O Lord, for I have sinned. My brethren, however safe you may be with respect to the covenant and eternal union, you will never be sound in your soul's experience until you are brought to this. Many evidences you may have; many good times, sweet helps and seasons, but this is the one thing: to be healed in your soul by the application to you of Jesus Christ and His perfect work. David perceived at this time, that the Lord had answered him, which says this: there is a definiteness in experience. Much of your experience may be nebulous, not clear to yourself; many of your feelings not clear; many of your ways not clear, many of your thoughts very evil, but there is a point to which, as you may be led by the Spirit, you are looking to attain, which is the chief desire of your souls, namely: to know that God has answered you. David perceived, saw, that God had answered him. Can you come to this? Some may say, 'No.' What then? Wait till you can, that is to say, wait till God brings you to it. The Lord told David to go to the threshingfloor. He may tell you to go to His Dear Son Jesus Christ. He may tell you in your heart, of the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and so now there is no healing but in that fountain. Go to that fountain. He may show you the righteousness of Christ, and say there is no justification but in that robe. Come for that robe, and as you are enabled to obey, the day will come when it will be said of you, said by you, 'Now I know that God has answered me, I know He has answered me, I have got it in my own soul, - I have got it!' Ah, it is the grandest moment of a person's life, whether it be at the first time or afterward, when again and again the forgiveness of sins is experienced and the sinner says, 'Now I know it. I have got it in my conscience.' He perceived, he saw that God had answered him. O it would be good if

every saint here could say, 'Now I know the Lord has answered me. He has given me what I desired, - the forgiveness of my sins.'

If any saints here are satisfied in any kind of way short of this, I will say to thee, now you have got a rude awakening awaiting you; you have got some trouble coming, something that will pierce you, something that will make you say you never got that one thing, and you rested satisfied more or less without it. You again said, 'I have not got it,' but you had not energy to seek it. You could not rise from your bed and seek the Lord in the darkness of the night; had not courage to bear any stripping that might be offered to you, or any seeming insult in the dark night that might be apparently offered to you by the watchmen, but you just said, 'Now I am easy.' I said, there is a rude awakening for you if you are satisfied with your bands. If you can just cover them over with this or with that seeming help, it looks a very evil case for you. May the Lord move you to seek Him. Some plague may come and tell you what danger you are in. Some plague may fall on you and say, - well but this is the sword of the Lord, and I have been talking all these years about His grace. I have been talking about love, and have not felt it; I have been talking about Christ, and have not received Him. It will be a good plague that brings you to that point when you hear the Lord say, 'Now go to Christ, He will put you right.' The plague will be stayed in His blood, and the evil will be overcome when you receive Him into your heart. "David saw at that time." Do not dissect the trouble from this answer. They are related. It was a time of trouble and then it was, that God answered the praying man. If you have got trouble in your conscience and God says to you by that, now you are wrong in this or in that thing, - you are not straight with My revealed will in this or in that thing, go to Shiloh, go to the cross, - then it will be good. David sacrificed there, continued, that is to say, he continued in the floor, the threshingfloor, continued to offer burnt offerings, and you, in that one offering satisfied and saved, will continue to worship and pray and praise and bless God for His unspeakable mercy.

Now that particular point I would keep before you. I verily believe that the day is coming, I may not see it, but some of you will, the day is coming when it will be a great and solemn test, how a man stands toward Jesus Christ, and the plague will come on

the nation, and the nations of the world, and when all the churches shall know that, "I search the heart, I try the reigns." The churches shall know it. Judgment will begin at the House of God. It is a trembling consideration to me. It shakes me at times. How do you stand? And when I see that Scripture, as I do at times, "Some of them of understanding shall fall, that they may be tried and purged and made white", (Daniel 11.35) - very solemn, it brings me before God and I think of you. How do you stand? Is the profession easy? Well it looks like it. Nobody contradicts you today. Nothing attaches of evil, apparently, to our coming here, but what when it is otherwise, - how should we stand? Look well to this then, see if you can get an answer from God to put you straight, unite you closely, unite you to the dear Lord Jesus Christ. If you are with Him, all the fighting against you won't hurt you in the end, for, "The Lamb shall overcome them," but if you are not straight here, if you are lacking here, if that comfortable profession you have made for years should fail you here; if your talk about grace should only prove to have been talk; if your seeming attachment to the Lord Jesus was never in the light of the Holy Ghost, - what then? It is a very solemn consideration for me, and should be to you, and I desire, by the help of the Lord, to press it on your attention, for the day is coming when the Son of man will come in awful judgment, and then, will He find faith on the earth? How many in this congregation will He find going up to this sacrifice and cleaving to that. How many will He find hanging about His door, finding what Jeremiah says, to be blessedly true, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our Sanctuary", finding also what is in the Psalms to be true, "Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"? No pestilence enters here. Your dwelling may be invaded by trouble, infested by some pestilence, or death may be shot into it by some arrow, but if you have got this secret place, this shadow, no harm will reach you. That is a beautiful word in that Psalm - no plague, no smiting of God, no anger of God, no judgment of God, shall enter thy dwelling. The dwelling in the first verse - Blessed is he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High and abideth under the shadow of the Almighty, (Psalm 91), and the safe place is in the previous Psalm, - Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations, - this is where saints are to live for ever and ever. Go to this threshingfloor. You will stand

well, if you go there. Yes, you will stand well, if you go there, and you will find the fire coming down from heaven, and find the answer of God in your soul, and feel then, - 'Now the Lord is on my side.' Jesus is your God and you will say, 'This God is my God for ever and ever, He will be my guide even unto death.' My brethren, what is religion worth, if there is no union with the Lord Jesus, and no application of His atoning blood. What is it? I think it is a weariness, a weariness to the flesh, but O, this is life and this is sweetness, this is beauty, this is everything: a sinner having some blessed contact by faith, with the Almighty Jesus. A sinner leaning on the arm of his Beloved. A sinner perceiving the plague of sin stayed in his conscience, and stayed in his affections, and stopped and moved for the time.

Well, I wish the Lord may give us an answer. Look for answers. "David saw at that time." Troublesome was the time, painful, shameful, weakening, confusing was the time. Ah, that tries people. What, - talk about religion, - having all that trouble! When God touches a man by His Spirit and fire, even if the man's circumstances be full of goodness and with no apparent trouble, he withers, he dies. I know it is so. "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Now if God should go on doing that and never hint at mercy, well the end is everlasting woe, but if the Spirit does it savingly, there is a stop put to that; there is a change brought and the trouble leads the man to ease and comfort and peace divine, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and God and this sinner come together. I do not want to speak too familiarly or use words that would convey anything like lightness in spirit, but I would say it reverently, God and this sinner come together and they are friendly. The Lord speaks friendly to the heart, and the sinner reverently says, 'This is my God.' The Lord receives the sinner, and the sinner embraces the Lord. Jesus smiles on the sinner and the sinner melts into happy contrition and rises into the sweetest comfort and joy. At that time of trouble and plague and appearance of Divine anger, David saw that God had answered him, by fire coming from heaven upon the altar. Mind the fire, the warm comfortable fire of acceptance in your conscience by the witness of the Holy Spirit. When you get that, you will say, 'This has come from heaven. This is the witness of

the Spirit with my spirit. This is the testimony of God in my conscience and I know that things are right between God and my soul.' Try to get near, my dear friends, you who have prayer in your souls, try to get near to Him. Ask Him to bring you near in this sacrifice. Ask Him to bless you in this sacrifice, and to comfort you in this sacrifice. It will take away all the short things and make everything quite clear. "Accepted in the Beloved."

Now may the Lord hear us and answer us; clothe us with righteousness; arm us with the whole armour of God, and when any plague breaks out, then may He direct us to this one place where plagues are stayed.

* * * * *