

1369 k
La 1912

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

2/19/95

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at
Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 27 March 1927

TEXT: 1 Peter 2 verse 25

"For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now
returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls"

We noticed this morning in the first place a little concerning the death of Christ, the atonement that Christ made, the ground and reason of the sheep, for whom He died, being brought to Him. May we never be indifferent to the ground of things. Always seek, as you seek anything from God, to be well set down in the doctrine of Christ, in the death of Christ and in those divine truths which are connected therewith. Any building on other ground will come down about your ears. Any building short of this blessed foundation will leave you lacking.

And then we noticed that this returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls is, in the first place, in the new birth, that a sinner born again is brought, in that act of regeneration by the Spirit, unto God, and in that he is passive. It is the mighty work of the Spirit, it is the application to him of Christ's death, it is the beginning of the gospel in him. You will never get to God without the new birth. You will never have peace with Him without being first of all born again. A form of godliness may please, but it will never save. Profession may please you, but it will never please God, if the new birth is lacking. And then we saw a little of the returning of the sinner thus blessed with the new birth. He comes with repentance, he comes in faith, comes with confession of sin, comes pleading the blood of Christ and looking for redemption. It is a great thing to have a motion in your soul Godward. The motion of sin in us is always hellward. The motion of faith is ^a Godward. Have we got that motion. It is easy to run away from God, but it is difficult to follow after Him. Every desire after Him has its opposite to contend with. Faith has its opposite, unbelief, to

oppose it, to contend with it. It is not easy but it is safe moving.

Now my dear friends, the text in the next place brings before us God. Awful, blessed truth. It brings Him before us in two characters, or filling two offices. First, the Shepherd, second, the Bishop. A Shepherd is one who feeds; a Bishop is one who rules. If the Episcopalians adhered to the meaning of the word, Bishop, which our translators have rendered, there would be no Bishop in the sense of the Anglican church. A Bishop is a man called of God to preach and set over a particular church, and the great Bishop of our souls is called of God to that office, and set over the children of the Most High, the enviable, blessed, happy church. And He stands and feeds and rules in the name of the majesty of the Lord His God. Let us, as enabled, take these two characters or offices which are sustained and filled by the Lord Jesus.

The sinner comes to the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd. Ah, the Shepherd is one who feeds. Said the Psalmist "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." False shepherds have terrible things spoken against them in the scriptures. You cannot but remember those solemn chapters in Ezekiel against the shepherds who feed themselves and devour the flock. Shepherds who tread down the pasture with their feet and defile the waters, foul them with their feet. There are many such shepherds today, but there is one Shepherd who takes care of His sheep and does feed them by leading into green pastures. Now it will be one sweet evidence to us that we are returned, and have returned to this Shepherd, if He feeds us. He feeds with food convenient to the sheep. The lambs feed after their manner, and the sheep feed after their manner. And the shepherd, the under-shepherd is to give a portion to seven and also to eight. This feeding of the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls is this - that He most mercifully gives Himself. "I am the bread of life". Now one of the best evidences of belonging to Christ is receiving Him. Receiving Him is receiving Him as sent of God; as having borne sin in His own body on the tree; as having been

raised from the dead by His own power, by His Father's power, and by the power of the Spirit; (That is, each person in the Trinity had a hand in Christ's resurrection) and as ascending into heaven. He is received as interceding there. He is received. This is the Bread of God which came down from heaven, which He gives to His people. May we never be satisfied with anything short of this. Blessed is that man who receives the Lord Jesus. Solemnly He said to the Jews - "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." When a sinner comes to Christ he comes hungry. He says sometimes to God "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God." Now this sinner has much trouble about and with his sins, his propensities, his foolishness, his death, his corruptions. He has much trouble, and that that does him good is what Christ gives to him by His Spirit. To drink the blood of Christ is to receive the atonement. The Apostle Paul speaks of this to the Romans - Having received the atonement. There are two ways of receiving it rightly. First, when it is seen by faith to be the only remedy for sin. Seen, at a distance, but seen really to be that by which alone sin can be removed from the sinner. O that is a wonderful sight, to believe that sin, your sin, and your person can be separated. That God, against whom you have sinned, can tell you that He never will hold your sin against you. That He will never bring it up against you in judgment. To believe what the Psalmist says - "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." To believe it, to see it at a distance only by precious faith is a wonderful thing. To believe that you and your sins, that are such a part of yourself as that you think sometimes and fear and feel that you never can get rid of them, that you never will be rid of them, that they will stick to you, live in you and prevail over you, until you sink into hell, can be separated, is wonderful. Even such a person can have it made known to him by precious faith, though he sees it at a distance, that he and his sins can be separated. That is a gospel truth, a divine principle. Have you received it like that? Has that reception of it had an influence, a power on your spirit, moving you, helping you, leading you to pray, to pray with hope. O how it has exalted the Saviour, how it has exalted His precious blood in

your eyes. How it has put a plea into your soul, seeking that you may have that wonderful thing done in you. Your sins removed, your transgressions forgiven. Now the Shepherd gives this, although it may be a good while before you thus receive this blessed assurance of your interest. Yet, receiving the atonement, there is, even in seeing it at a distance, an influence, a power. It brings you to the Lord, helps you to say "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord for it is great". Now I would say to any who may be in this case, just cleave to that, plead it, urge it, argue with the Lord on the ground of it, make mention of it continually and never, God keep you from doing so, never turn aside from the blessed atonement of the Lord Jesus. Never turn away from it. Now He feeds the soul sometimes with the powerful application of His atonement. O the blessedness of this can never be adequately expressed. God telling a sinner, and making him believe it, that his sins are all forgiven. And this is so wonderful; there is not required by the Lord a good feeling; there is not required anything that the sinner is to take in his hands; he is to be just a ruined, polluted, guilty person. If I could possibly and fully express the freeness of this, I would be glad. If you can, for a moment, remove from your minds every thought of a condition, a good thought, a gracious disposition, a docile spirit, a repenting heart; if you can remove from your mind the thought that you must be clean in any particular thing before the Lord can forgive you, you will find then perhaps some idea of the freeness of forgiveness. O dear friends it is as free as God can make it "Without money", He says, "and without price". "Let your soul delight itself in fatness" And this, not seven times only, but seventy times seven. Yea, many a time, many a time, forgave He their iniquity. That is a very illustrious scripture in the Romans, where the Apostle tells that one transgression brought condemnation and death, one transgression. But, says he, by the inspiration of the Spirit - the free gift is not so. Condemnation was by one, one sin. The free gift is of many offences, many offences, unto justification. This will suit an old sinner who has had many a blessing in his soul. Many offences, all put away, forgiven. Cleared is the sinner, justified is the sinner. God and the sinner brought together without anything in between them in the way of distance,

guilty, sinful distance. Bone of Christ's bone, flesh of His flesh, and members of His body in particular. God always speaks the truth; He cannot lie. He says this (O sinner may he help you to believe it) "Thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee" Now that is true. Not felt, not fully enjoyed often, but it is true. No spot, no blemish, nor any such thing. No wrinkle. You see wrinkles on an old man's face and they say, there is decay of nature. No wrinkle, no death, no decay, nothing in between God and a sinner of a disabling nature, a disqualifying nature, nothing. So does the Shepherd feed a sheep. He says "I have loved thee, I have redeemed thee, I have bought thee with My blood. This is food convenient for a sinner. O think of it, it is food convenient for a sinner. It establishes his faith; it liberates his soul; it comforts his heart; it gives him to understand a little of the love of God, the freeness, the greatness, the beauty, the sovereignty and the power and the glory of it. The love of Christ in bearing a sinner's sins in His own body on the tree, and then the Spirit sent to bring that efficacious death, that vital blood, to the conscience, whereby the sinner knows what Peter says in this Epistle "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ". That is the redemption brought by the Shepherd.

Now sometimes He feeds a sinner with a promise. Every gospel promise has heaven in it. Not felt always, not fully apprehended, but it is true. If the Lord lets down into your heart, by His good Spirit, a promise of help, that means He will never leave you until He has performed all that He has spoken to you of. "I will help thee" will live as long as you live, as long as you need it. Every sort of help, for the soul, for circumstances, for trouble, for affliction, every kind of help. There is nothing left out when God gives a promise to His people. Promises are full promises, pregnant of good, good such as only God can give. The Shepherd feeds faith with promises. He lets them down. And they can say, with good Jeremiah, always full of trouble, yet he said "Thy word was found, and I did eat it, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." You

understand it, you who have had it in some measure. I found, you say I found it in my heart and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart, to think and believe that God loved me and cared for me, and would attend to my needs and heal my sick soul, and guide my wandering heart and feet into the way of truth and peace and comfort. He told me He would help me; I believe it; He told me He would not let me go astray so as I should fall into hell. O faith gets nourished thus. Surely David got something of this when he said, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He leadeth me in green pastures and beside the still waters. He leads me into His truth, into some promise, into some branch of the gospel. He leads me to Himself; He leads me into the footsteps of the flock. He leads me to perceive that He is about me, and around me, and over me, and under me, and in every way that I stand in need of. Every way. Well dear friends, what a Shepherd you have come to, those of you who have been returned. What a Shepherd you have come to. Wild beasts within, of sin, and wild beasts of enemies of the gospel without, and wild troubles and dispensations of various kinds, these threaten to destroy. But this Good Shepherd, He does not flee away like the hireling. No, He meets the sinner, He blesses the sinner, He feeds the sinner, He nourishes his faith, He comforts his soul.

Sometimes He will feed a sinner by opening to him and alleging to him in his heart, the covenant of grace. "I have made a covenant with My chosen". This chosen One is Christ, and, He was called to be a priest. And I think I shall not be outside the scope of my text if I just say this, that this great Shepherd of the sheep was brought again from the dead, and that means that He died, that He gave Himself an offering and sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God, and that He answers, and He alone answers fully, to that blessed word in Jeremiah where, speaking of His restoring mercies to Israel, He said "And their nobles shall be of themselves". And I find that the learned in the language in which that was written, say that it means, and is, this - Thy noble One shall be of thyself, chosen out of the people. That noble one is Jesus Christ. He is the governor, as it follows in that same verse, the governor on whose shoulder is peace, and the government that shall know no end. And this is

the Shepherd of whom we read - that He shall stand and feed, or rule, in the name of the majesty of His God and when men are brought against them, even eight principal men, this Shepherd shall stand against them when the Assyrian shall come into their land. He stands against all enemies. The shepherd's duty was to take care of the sheep, to watch over them, and this is what our good and great Shepherd does. He takes care of us. Yes, when sin threatens to destroy us, He comes with his grace. When gloom hangs upon our spirit, He comes with His light and life. And, when temptation comes, the tempter is rebuked, according to His gracious promise. And, when we are weak, and scarcely able to stand, He makes us stand. "God is able to make him stand" He shall stand. Come to this, have you come to this blessed person, this Jesus Christ? Yes, many a time some of us have come to Him. We have returned when weary of wandering from Him, and have found no rest for our souls away from Him, and then He has brought us back by the grace of His good Spirit, and we have found rest in Him again, and nourishment and defence. Look then to this great one.

Ye are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. There is one other matter that sometimes this Good Shepherd feeds faith with - this - He will feed your faith with a prospect of heaven. The Apostle Paul had that nourishment and he writes of it in the Corinthians. He says "We know that if the earthly house of this our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And in the chapter preceeding that, he says "Though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day." Renewed, not brought out of trouble, but renewed, while in trouble. So he says "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." You look at your troubles and find they are neither light nor momentary according to natural reasoning and reckoning. You look at eternal things and you see then, in the light of eternal things, that your afflictions, so long, and so heavy, lose, as it were, their

duration, and their intolerable weight. They become light and momentary. Why, what brings that to pass? The moving of the Spirit of God upon your soul, the enlightening of your understanding in the things of God. Then, then you can follow the Apostle "We know", we who are in this tabernacle and groan, we who suffer these things, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". This is seeing the land which is very far off. This is brought to pass by getting a view of the King in His beauty. The great and good Shepherd of our souls. O He nourishes faith. When you get this sight, then you feel that you would not hasten the end, but you would not retard its approach. 'Tis good to wait on God under the sweet feeling that you have a house, a mansion, prepared for you, and that one day He will come and take you to that mansion. "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Now probably those of you who are younger in years and in experience than some others, may scarcely appreciate this. You have many years before you, speaking naturally; a good deal to live in and through. The day will come when you will say I could not at all enter into what the minister said at that time, but now I can enter into it. There is a weariness in respect of life sometimes. There is a burden of mortality, heavy burden, sometimes, as well as the burden of indwelling sin. And, when the Saviour, to whom we have been brought, and to whom we have gone again and again, time after time, says - Now I will come again and receive you unto Myself, you see Him, you hear His voice, you believe what He says, you follow Him as your Shepherd, you walk the way He Himself walked and you say "I believe God that it shall be even as it was said unto Me." Now I think that is a wonderful piece of nourishment that the Lord gives when you receive His word in this way. You eat His flesh, you drink His blood, you live in Him, you live by Him, you cleave to Him. Sweet it is to live on Christ. Sweet to live in Christ, and sweet to live to Him. Wearying troubles become less troublesome by the moment. Weariness of the flesh is more bearable when you have the prospect that Christ sets before you. Returned? Then you are in the fold, in the blessed fold. Eternal love is a fold; the gospel is a fold. The living church of Christ is in the fold but

we go out. We go out in experience, get out of these sweet and comfortable things, and go into the world of trial and darkness and difficulty, and know not which way to take. Then we go in again. He shall go in and out and find pasture, for his soul's nourishment and life. But when the end comes there is a going in and no more going out. "Him that overcometh" He says "will I make a pillar in the temple of My God and he shall go no more out". O to go in, O to be in that blessed land where there is no death, because there is no sin. Wont it be wonderful. O believer, lift up your head, for your salvation draws nigh. O poor, trodden down, child of God, as you are brought to the good Shepherd, He will tell you many things, and everything He tells you will be like bread for your faith, strong meat for your soul, whereby you will grow and flourish and bear fruit to His praise and glory.

And Bishop, a ruler, one who stands and rules. Every God sent minister placed over a church, a single church, is a Bishop in the sense of the word as it is used in the New Testament. Jesus is the Bishop, the universal Bishop, of all His poor churches and they are gathered in His heart and gathered up in His hand and no man can pluck them out of either His heart or His hand. But He rules them, and one awful sin in our nature, He breaks, as to the dominion of it - this - "Who is the Lord that we should obey Him. Our lips are our own." That lordly self has to come down before the imperious love of Christ. He bore the collected guilt of His people. Now, under His powerful grace and the Spirit's teaching, they come down and they do not say, nor do they wish to say, when in their right mind, we are our own, our lips are our own. What they want to say, and what they are taught to say, and do say sometimes, is, thine are we David; Thine are we Lord Jesus and on Thy side Thou Son of God. And sometimes we sing that in the spirit and substance of it - Here's my heart, Lord take and seal it; let it be for ever closed to all but Thee. And the Bishop rules. He rules, and if you have never known that rule, you are not a Christian, and if you are ever made a christian, you will know the rule. Down you will fall, onto your knees you will get. In your spirit you will kneel, your heart will kneel before Him, and you will say, be

merciful to me. Hide Thy face from my sins. Blot out all my transgressions. Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. This Bishop rules. He stands, He rules, in the name of the Majesty of the Lord His God. O the sceptre, the golden sceptre held out to a coming sinner, and the sinner is encouraged to approach and touch it, and he touches it and owns the sovereignty and the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Have you ever come to this Bishop? Yes, some must say it. We have been brought to Him; we have gone to Him by faith and in prayer and supplication and said

Reign o'er us as King
Accomplish Thy will
And powerfully bring us forth from all ill

Is not it wonderful for a sinner, self-willed, lordly sinner, to come into the position of a child, to have a docile spirit, instead of his wild spirit, and to say that to the Lord. O blessed be the Lord Jesus for becoming the Bishop of our souls. Some of us may indeed say, blessed be His Name for holding out the sceptre to us and wielding that sceptre in our hearts and consciences. Well, He will rule in providence and He will say this, sometimes, pointing out the way that may be very difficult, and you may shrink from it "This is the way walk ye in it" Is this the way? Is the way to grow in grace, to be broken up? Is the way to grow in wisdom, to become a fool? Is the way to be strong, to become weak? And is the way to obedience to walk in a path of which you scarcely see one step before you? That is the way. Well, if you are brought to the Shepherd, you will find the food, and if you are brought to the Bishop, you will feel His sceptre. You will find both. You will receive the food, the nourishment, and you will be thankful to be under the authority. Yes, let me not be alone "Leave me not" "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" "Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth". Leave me not without the gospel. O leave me not without the doctrine of Christ and the doctrines of grace, all of which come from Him. He is the Shepherd of Israel. He comes from God; He comes from among the people, chosen out of the people, and there He stands as the door into the fold. He is as the Shepherd

of the flock, and He sits on His throne as the great Bishop to rule over them. Our shepherds drive their flocks; Jesus leads His flock. Bishops rule in wrong things; our Bishop rules in the gospel. Mild is His rule, though powerful, and efficacious. His yoke is easy, His burden is light, and we know it. Some of us know it.

Well now, may the Lord bring us more and more into an acquaintance with this text. "For ye are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls". You went astray like lost sheep. God laid the iniquity of all of you on His Son. His Son bore all away, made a full atonement, and now, being brought again from the dead, He is the great Shepherd and Bishop in His church. I say, may we be brought into an acquaintance, an intimacy, with this.

AMEN.