

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 19 November 1933

1 SAMUEL 12 v 22

"For the Lord will not forsake His people for
His great Name's sake, because it hath pleased
the Lord to make you His people"

The connection of this word is deeply interesting and instructive. You are acquainted with it. Hitherto the nation had been what men call "theocratic" that is, God had been their king. Then degeneration, which was constantly showing itself by their turning aside from God, took a step forward, a step in the wrong direction, and they asked for a king that they might be like other nations. A remarkable thing. If you turn aside and want somebody or something that you may be like other people, woe to you. They wanted to be like the heathen nations about them, from whom God had separated them, and said that they were not to be as the heathen, were not to learn their manners, were not to give their daughters to the sons of the heathen nor take the daughters of the heathen for their sons. Separation from the world was remarkably set forth in this type. When churches turn aside and seek to be like other people, it is a sad thing. These people asked for a king and the saying displeased Samuel very much but the Lord said to him they have not rejected you, they have rejected Me. May God help us to take very close heed to this. When you turn aside and seek other things, it is a rejection of God. But the Lord set a king over them and Samuel gave them the order and kind of government, what the king would do, how he would oppress them, take a tenth of their crops and of their sons and of their daughters. He would take all he needed, or thought he needed. Yet they said, Nay, we will have a king notwithstanding all you tell us, we will have a king. That is human nature. No matter what God says, you will have your way if you are not born again. You will have your way until you are stopped. And now the day had come when the Lord would allow this king to come forth and Samuel was to demonstrate to the people the evil which they had committed, hence the chapter which I read. Notwithstanding, Samuel tells them not to turn aside, not to go

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further away from God, lest they should follow after vain things which could not profit nor deliver because they are vain. Then Samuel demonstrated to them by a singular thing what the Lord thought of their doing. "Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king." And that was done and the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

This is before us and by the help of the Lord I shall set before you the infinite goodness, love, mercy, and faithfulness of God to faithless people, to His own children, who, times without number turn aside from Him - "For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great Name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people".

Let us look at this in connection with the church of the living God and take notice of some of the evidences that He will not, that He does not, forsake His people for His great Name's sake. Two things that were done in answer to Samuel's cry to the Lord, thunder and rain in time of harvest, may be taken spiritually without any fancifulness, when a child of God or a church of God shall turn aside, when it may have been more than once or twice, and some of you have turned aside from God, He has sent thunder, thundered into your consciences some rebuke. A time when you were easy, when pleasant plants and the strange slips which you had set were grown and you were taking pleasure in them, then He thundered into your consciences and told you solemnly what you had done, where you had got to and you feared Him. It is a mercy that the Lord does this with His people. We shall never be able sufficiently to thank Him for sending thunder, that is a word with power and authority into the conscience, arresting and teaching and bending the heart before Him with solemn conviction of having done wrong. These people feared God greatly and Samuel and they said "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." And something has come and you have said, God has been good to me, but I have been evil in my conduct to Him. He has been kind to me but I have turned aside from Him, and what shall I do. In Ezekiel the people are reported to be saying, we pine away in our sins; how

then should we live? (Ezekiel 33 v 10) And when you have had some conviction that has been like thunder, at a day you do not expect such a visitation, when you were expecting to reap your evil sowing, then I say you have said, how shall we live? A very solemn dispensation that is, and I entreat any of the Lord's people here who have had such a dealing of God with them to take very close heed to it and may grace be given to fall flat before Him. This people had no excuse on this occasion. They said "We have added unto all our sins this evil". And you may say, I have added to my many backslidings this one. I have added to my many turnings aside this one. I have added to all that I have done before, this that has hardened my heart, but now this thunder has terrified me. God's word makes, to the people to whom it is spoken in rebuke, in reproof, a thundering. It arrests, it shakes, it destroys false confidence, it rejects it, and the sinner says, I have sinned. I have added to all my sins this, I have got tired of God. Malachi was inspired to charge the people with that. They said of the service of God, what a weariness is it. I know what that means. I got into a backsliding state many years ago, 60 years ago, and for months my inward condition was a grievous one in the sight of God though I did not know it. But I knew that of the service my heart said, what a weariness is it. When God came it was thunder in my conscience. I was obliged to heed it as all are to whom God so speaks and then they fall down, fall flat before Him. We have sinned, we have committed this evil, we were tired of God's service, we wanted to be independent of Him, and took means whereby we might possibly accomplish that. But no, now He has come. Mark His coming, my friends; mark His coming. Mark every clap of thunder that comes from the Scripture by the Holy Spirit into your consciences. God has something to say when He thunders. He has got some charge to make against you, some complaint to make. He sent rain, rain in conviction. A shower comes of solemn conviction into your soul and you fear a flood. He sent that. True religion is very solemn. God's dealings are very weighty. They kill the flippancy of nature in various ways and the rain was not, at this time, a rain of mercy. It was a rain in wheat harvest when their sun shone in a calm sky week after week and no drop of rain ordinarily fell. And that is how God deals with His people spiritually. What then? O said Samuel, "Fear not", the very thing that they were feeling. They were trembling at the word of God, they were afraid that their harvest was going to be

utterly destroyed, yea, that they themselves were not to live. Then he said "Fear not" You have done an evil thing but with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption. With Him is forgiveness. Therefore, fear not. How timely is God's "Fear not" How fitting it is to a sinner who is full of fear and says, I deserve this. No, said the prophet Samuel, "Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness", yet now that you are convinced of it and are before the Lord fearing greatly, "Fear not" for He will not forsake you. How wonderful is this. I do not think any human language will ever be able adequately to set forth the infinite kindness of God in this word at such a season, before such sins, such guilt, that He should say to the guilty ones: Fear not, I wont forsake you. Now when this is the case mercy is very near. Now I will give you, as God may help me, several signs that God has not forsaken you, you who are His people, and with whom He may be dealing solemnly and the first is confession. No excuses; confession. We have added to our sins, this evil, and you begin to confess. You may not be able to say how long on a night you were awake, mourning and confessing and putting before the Lord your sins, and wondering that He has allowed you to live, that His providence has preserved your life. Yea, you may have been so engaged in this business of confession and putting before Him all that you could remember and then asking Him to look on you in the great bulk of your transgression, until at last He has said, speak no more to Me of this. How good of Him. I remember that very well in my own case. He stops confession sometimes. If He did not, it might, through temptation, become excessive, but He stops it. Speak no more to Me of this. Why not? I wont forsake you. With Him is mercy, with Him is plenteous redemption. Confession is then a sign that God will not forsake you. His ear is open to the cry of the humble. His eye is on the heart that is broken, on the spirit that is contrite. He sees there an acceptable sacrifice. And following, rather one should say accompanying, this is prayer, another sign that God will not forsake you. When He has no mercy for people He does not give prayer for mercy. When mercy is in store then mercy is prayed for. When forgiveness is asked, forgiveness is ready. When salvation is needed, salvation is near. "The Lord was ready to save me". And surely some of you who may be under sharp conviction, may be listening to some thundering word in your conscience, you will find, as God gives you prayer, there will be a stilling of that voice, of that

thunder. There will be a movement in your heart Godward, whereas the thunder might have frightened you and driven you away. Now the still small voice of the Holy Spirit in you will be making intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered and we should, and we shall, if we are wise, spiritually wise, in such a case take very particular heed to that. Can you pray? Do you feel enabled to pray? Do you get access to God? Is there a moving, a melting of your heart before God, a sorrow for your sins? Do you sometimes feel you can say with the Psalmist "I will be sorry for my sin". Then God has not forsaken you. Another sign is that the Holy Ghost begins again to perform His covenant office which Jesus promised - He said "He shall glorify Me" - and He gives a view of the Lord Jesus, of the cross of Christ, of the infinite worth of the precious blood of Christ, and that, though for the moment it does not take away all the guilt, greatly encourages you to hope. Yea, then what the Lord would have, is done. You fix your hope in the Lord. "That your hope might be in God". It is in the dear, ever blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, and you look to His blood and to that alone for reconciliation. Here a man moves more comfortably, quietly, hopefully, believingly, with his eye on the Lord Jesus. The cross of Christ becomes again his lively hope and he is all but ready to sing the song of salvation, yea to take the cup of salvation and praise the Lord. God has not forsaken a man, a woman, a child of His in whom all this is wrought by the Holy Spirit. That sinner has God for his God. That sinner has the Holy Spirit for his instructor and for his guide. That sinner, though he has turned aside and gone astray days without number and forgotten his resting place, now is being turned, is turned, in that heavenly direction again. He says, let me go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord. His footsteps are there directed. How beautiful are his feet with shoes.

Well the Lord will not forsake His people and He gives them another sign. Whereas His word, when He would convince and condemn and lay low, was thunder and also rain, now His word is different. It is "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". It is this "With the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption". It is, "He will not always chide neither will He keep His anger for ever". That is His word. Come to Me, He says. Open your mouth wide. I brought you out of Egypt. You have turned away from Me from the very day I brought

you out of Egypt until now, yet turn to Me. O the loving invitation the Lord gives, the kind attraction He makes Himself to be in the heart, in the conscience, in the spirit. He has not forsaken a sinner with whom He thus deals. Then the sinner may be saying, O but Lord, my sins and the future. I am afraid of that. I cannot promise anything. He may drop this unto you - sins past, sins present, sins to come, all washed away by the precious blood of Christ. Have you got these signs? Bless God for them.

The Lord will not forsake His people. Another sign will be this. He may send a minister of truth to you to speak to your case. You may go to the service with little hope, perhaps not very much prayer, more trembling and fear than anything else and He may give His servant a word to take your case up. You may think, surely there can be nothing in the service for me, and yet, without the minister knowing anything about it, he may just take the case up and speak about it so that, in spite of all your unbelief, you believe you are a believer. You say the Lord has not given me up. After all my guilt and all my fears, He has not given me up. And you say of the minister, now know I that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true, for the power of it is in my soul, the authority of it is in my conscience. The Lord will not forsake His people.

But now, leaving the signs, let us come to the reason. O what a reason. Not in the sinner, not in his tears, not in his confessions, not in his turning again to the Lord. No, nothing. You were singing just now what is true, not the labour of my hands, not my tears. What then? The reason is in God. The reason is God Himself. For His great Name's sake. O said Moses and Joshua, if the people are destroyed what will become of Thy great Name? What wilt Thou do for it? How difficult you may find it to believe that your salvation and God's honour are linked, tied together, to believe that you, a most unclean creature, can be found in that great sheet which was let down from heaven knit at the four corners, to Peter wherein were all manner of four footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. It was taken up into heaven again and O my friends, it just is this, for His great Name's sake.

This brings us to a consideration of the covenant, of the

Priest, Jesus Christ, the crowned Priest sitting on His throne, crowned, yet a Priest, the covenant between the Persons of the Trinity. Though only two are named there in Zechariah (6 v 13) yet the Holy Ghost, being a Person in the Godhead, can never be left out of any council of God. He is always there. Not often named in certain Scriptures for one reason, He is the author of the Scripture, but there is the council. And the Apostle, or rather first Jeremiah, he speaks of the covenant, the new covenant which God will make not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers which covenant they brake, though I was an husband to them, but this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their mind and write them in their heart and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people, and they shall no more say every man to his neighbour and to his brother: Know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more, for My great Name's sake. (Jeremiah 31 v 32 and Hebrews 8) There it is.

And further, out of this covenant, have come showers of blessings on the people of God. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessings upon thine offspring," and these showers of blessing are the gospel, the everlasting gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ. These showers come freely. They do not wait for a man who is in the field to get to his home. They just come down, sovereignly, sweetly, sometimes unexpectedly, and there is a fulness in them. The Apostle speaks of coming to the Romans in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ, and these blessings, given so freely, so abundantly, so sovereignly, involve this great Name of God. His honour is engaged to save the meanest of His sheep. Think of it, O believer in present distress, think of it. When a shower comes that does really contain in it the honour of God. Can He have blessed you, can He have given you a promise, and then forsake you? What would become of His great Name? He will not. He will come again. The Spirit will come again. The Holy Spirit will renew the face of the earth. Jesus will renew the face of the earth and the Father will again and again receive these, His adopted, wayward prodigals. "For His great Name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you

His people". He was under no obligation to any of us to bless us but He would do it; He would bless - eternal love in personal election. God, by the prophet, Moses, said to Israel, the Lord did not set His love upon you because you were the greatest of all people for ye were the fewest, but He would do it because it pleased Him. Pleaseth God? You know what pleasure is, what natural pleasure is, when you do a thing, take hold of a thing, adopt a thing or a profession and have success. It pleased God to save sinners; it pleased Him to give His Son for sinners; it pleased His Son to come, to be made of a woman, made under the law, to be made sin and take away the sins of His people. It pleased Him to do it. The Lord taketh pleasure in His people because it hath pleased Him to make them His people. Pleaseth Him? Yes; He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man, but He taketh pleasure in the fear that the man of God has. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him because He has made them to fear Him. He has gathered them to His footstool. He has given them a new heart and a right spirit. He has blessed them with that faith that honours Him and which He honours. It hath pleased God to call you by grace. Yes, yes it pleased Him to grant to you the new birth. Then will He give it up? O but I am wayward. Will He give it up? Is waywardness more than the blood of Christ? Is backsliding more than the restoring power of the love and power of Christ. I am not making a little of sin. I hope that that idea will not be in any of your minds. Sin is an infinitely black thing, but the exaltation of Christ is above all that. He removed it all. He cast it all behind His back into the depth of the sea of forgetfulness by God. never to be remembered, never to be mentioned again.

The blood of Christ, a precious blood
Cleanseth from all sin, doubt it not
And reconciles the soul to God
From every folly, every fault

and William Gadsby says whatsoe'er thy name or age be it has no influence here. A poor, old sinner, grey haired, ready to die, blessed with grace comes, with the thunder in his conscience and the rain of judgment on his circumstances, he comes and says, Lord, save my soul. He stands by the side of the thief and says, Lord remember me as Thou hast promised to remember this thief. He ranks

himself with the publican and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner". He goes to the jailor and says here is a friend, a brother in sin and a brother in prayer, "What shall I do to be saved?" and God hears him. and for His great Name's sake will not forsake that redeemed, that chosen sinner, but will forgive him. Then said Samuel turn not aside. You have done it, now God has called you back. Turn not aside, follow Him, follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth and all will be well with you. May the Lord grant this to be our case and our experience.

AMEN.