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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 1 February 1925

2 CORINTHIANS 1 V 20

"For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and
in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us"

I may just remind you that this morning I looked at the promises of God first as being promises of gifts, and second as being promises of works. I said yet a third point was, promises of presence, and it is this last point that I would take up and a little speak about as enabled this evening, before noticing anything else in the text.

It is a mercy for fickle creatures, for unfaithful sinners, such as are we, to have an interest in a promise that cannot be broken; in a promising God who cannot deny Himself, which He would do if He broke a promise. The promises of God's presence in the church are abundant in the Scriptures. These promises are all-inclusive, all-covering. There is no case, no trouble, no sorrow, no danger, no temptation, no need that God has passed over and overlooked in the promises. He has put all there; everything that can be needed, desired, and sought. And very distinctly, promises respecting the presence of the Trinity, the Three Persons in the Godhead, abound in the Scriptures. There are "exceeding great and precious promises". There is the promise of the Father. His grace separates, always separates. If we have His grace, He has separated us from the world, and has called us to come out of it and be separate from it, and said, I will receive you, and you shall be My children and I will be your Father. It is in this Epistle - I will be unto you a Father saith the Lord Almighty. Now the presence of the Father will be known by you, if you have that presence, by His teaching, by His drawing. "Whom shall He teach knowledge". "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me." A coming sinner then is one who has the presence and the teaching of God the Father, though he may not always realise it. That attraction that is felt by a sinner to and in Jesus Christ is by the teaching, the drawing power of God the Father. He honours His Son, honours Him in the office to which He has appointed

Him; in the Priesthood to which He has called Him. He honours Him as the Throne of Grace; honours Him in His atoning work, and by the gracious work manifests His presence in poor sinners, as if He were saying to them, Come to My Son; what you need is in Him; what I will give you is in Him; what you are to experience you will experience as coming from Him. This is one way in which God the Father makes Himself known as being present with His children. I might here ask if we feel that drawing, that attraction to the Lord Jesus. If we are led to bring our cases, our soul cases, our providential cases, our difficulties, our sinfulness, our sins and our failings, if we are led to bring them to the Lord Jesus; if we feel, at times, a distinct attraction to Christ; if His cross is set before us; if we feel that there our hope is centred, there we see all that we need; thence we draw our hopes and our comforts, when we have comforts; this is from the presence of the Father. It was typified in the old dispensation. There was the Ark, in the law of it, a type of Christ. There were the cherubims over that and there was the glory of God in the midst of His people, attracting them by telling them how to come with blood. All the shed blood said there was a way, a new and living way, to that God whose glory was in the Shekinah. Now that in the anti-type of it is God the Father drawing sinners to God the Son incarnate. I say this, if God is with us, we certainly shall find our needy, sinful souls drawn to the dear Saviour, the unfailing Friend, Jesus Christ. This is a sure promise, the presence of God the Father with His people. It is His good pleasure to give them the kingdom. He sent His Son to be the Prophet and the Priest and the King and He is with Him in all this. God was with His Son, and the Son said in that remarkable chapter and prayers - the 17 Chapter of John's Gospel - "I in them and Thou in Me." And in the 14 chapter of the same Gospel you have that notable word: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father", for the Father shines in His Son and dwells in the Church to honour His Son, attract people, His Own dear quickened and blood-bought people to Him. Take notice then of this point and see if you find that sweet attraction to the Lord Jesus that comes from heavenly teaching - I will put My law into their mind and in their heart I will write it. 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 to the greatest, saith the Lord. They are drawn. He teaches them knowledge; He teaches them doctrine, by drawing them to His beloved Son.

And secondly the promise relates to the presence of Jesus Christ in His people, with His people, and this is wonderful. God has highly exalted His Son, and ere leaving this world to take His place on the Conqueror's throne, He made this distinct promise to His people: "I am with you alway, even to the end of the world". In all their troubles, in all their afflictions, He was afflicted; the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them. This is the presence of Christ, and when it is not felt, it is there. But when it is not felt, then the cry is: "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil" to make Thyself a great Name. (Isaiah 64 v 1/2). This presence is thus expressed by Him: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee", for I am the Lord thy Maker; again He says, thy Husband. And if you are put into the furnace of affliction that the dross about and in you may be consumed, you will find, sooner or later, this presence. It will animate your faith, it will brighten your hope, it will draw out your love, it will confirm you in Christ, it will make you know that He esteems you highly; that He takes this trouble with you because you belong to Him. That He sitteth as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; that He intends that He may see in you His Own image. He sitteth there; He looks at the process, He sees what you see, and sees more of it; He sees the scum, and you see that and think there is nothing else. He sees the gold, the silver. He knows the refining process is proceeding, the heavenly intention is being accomplished in this affliction. He is with you, and when any dispensation has accomplished the end for which it is sent, then there is an end to the dispensation. Christ is with His people in their afflictions, and this is very evident from time to time, for He draws near; He speaks comfortably to them; He says, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee". Redemption rises high and carries them on its bosom to heaven. It rises in their estimation, it rises in its power in their consciences, it embraces them in their souls, it comforts them in their tribulation, it is their plea before the Father, it is their support in affliction, it is the comfort of their consciences,

it is the strength of their faith, and Jesus Christ is here with His people. He comes, at times, to conduct them to a place of rest. "He brought me into the banqueting house". "He brought me into the banqueting house". Yea, says the church, having His presence: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste". You can sit there in trouble; you can be quiet in trouble; when you are there, you are quiet. "When He giveth quiet, who then can make trouble". Nothing can disturb your peace when the Lord is with you. His presence is with His people in trouble, for "He sitteth upon the floods. Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." And sometimes He says to the waves, and to the storm, Be still, and there is a great calm. When in trouble you go to the throne of God's heavenly grace, He comes sometimes and gives you to see Himself, and then you sit down under His shadow, content to leave yourself, your afflictions, and everything concerning you with Him. You feel to be in His hands and would not be anywhere else. This is the sweet effect of His gracious presence. He is with you sometimes in His Word: "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart", and it could not be that without Him, for He is in the word. The word is His word, the word of His mouth, the word of His grace, the word of His power, the word of His love. He is in the soul in His blessed word and when you find a word spoken to you, you know how it animates, how it draws, how it teaches, how it strengthens, how it fixes you. He is there in it. "The written and the incarnate Word in all things are the same."

He is with His people in their providential matters. Your needs, your afflictions, these are all in His hand and He works by them and works in them for that good which He has designed. "I am with you" He said "always even to the end of the world." And when He seems to be angry, then He says: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee"; for a small moment I dealt with thee as if I were an enemy, and chastised thee with the chastisement of a cruel One, but with lovingkindness, with everlasting mercy, will I gather thee. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." His gracious presence is known in matters of affliction which perplex and pain and weaken and trouble His people; with them to the end of the

world.

He is with them sometimes most sweetly to entertain them. "I am come into My garden My sister" He says. He comes into the ordinances of His house. He has promised to be with His servants, and though they get much discouraged at times because they see not the fruit and effect of their labours as they desire, and are sometimes ready to faint in the matter, still there is no doubt as to His presence according to His promise. My Word shall not go in vain, He said; I am with My Word. And every minister of the gospel has to prove it more or less, that when he speaks, though he has not the sense of God's favour he would have, he is led to believe that the Lord is in the word, and he sees it in some cases later, and I have been very glad to believe Philpot's word: he says, The Lord has promised to bless, not the feelings of the minister, but the truth he preaches. Christ is with His people in the ordinances of His house; He has promised it. "Go", He said, "and baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, when that is regularly, that is by faith, properly attended to, there is an eating and a drinking of the Lord's body and His blood, and this could not be without that spiritual presence which is promised. "I am with you always even to the end of the world."

With them as their Shepherd to take care of them. "I am the Good Shepherd". With them as their Prophet to teach them the good and the right way. As their High Priest. Made a High Priest for ever; made a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. With them as their King to protect them. And they need all these offices of Christ, that is, His presence in them. They need them all. With them to comfort them: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, saith the Lord and ye shall be comforted" Look, O believing people, troubled, plagued by sin, troubled by a tempting devil, distressed and distracted by the lusts of a fallen nature; look for the Lord Jesus. Ask His presence, seek it, and when you get a little gale as Toplady speaks, then may you be enabled to take advantage of it, bring large petitions; lay the whole case, both of soul and body, of spiritual matters and temporal concerns, before that great and blessed One, who says: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Absolute

promises are here, and if they are absolute, their fulfilment, as I remarked this morning, depends on Him who has made them. Bless God for His gracious presence as promised.

There is the promise of the Holy Spirit. His presence is with the Church. As He was about to leave His people He said to them: I send upon you the promise of the Father, but tarry at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. And in the Gospel of John you know how graciously, tenderly, pitifully, and sweetly He promises the Spirit. He calls Him "another Comforter". He Himself had been a Comforter and He would not, as He was to leave them, leave them comfortless, so He said "I will send you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth". The world cannot receive Him; it knoweth Him not, but ye know Him for He shall dwell with you and be in you. And the manner of His indwelling is thus described. "He shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Now if you never have any motion toward God, then you have no Holy Spirit. But if you have motion to Him, attraction, moving, enabling, impelling, prompting in your souls, then you have the Holy Spirit. If you see Christ, you see Him by the faith that the Spirit gives, and the sight of Him that the Spirit gives. If you see Him crucified, the Spirit gives you that sight. "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Also to apply the word, to make it known in its power, to speak it and explain it, to make known the sweet contents of it. Ah, it is one thing to read the Bible - and a good thing it is in itself - but it is another thing for some passage to come into your heart and talk with you and open its contents to you and give you, in your astonishment, to see a good God in it, and to feel a promise in it and the power of it. That is the Spirit's work in a sinner, in a child of God. He dwells in them. He is in them as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He gives knowledge on knowledge; blessing on blessing; grace for grace. Today one view of Christ; and another day another view of Him in some different particular perhaps, so as that Christ becomes "The chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely". This is His promise, and I will keep this before you. These blessings are promised. The presence of the Trinity is promised. The Holy Ghost is said by Christ to be known in and by the church as dwelling; a river of water He is said to be;

flowing life, sweet movements Godward, blessed upliftings, liftings that the sinner is conscious of at the moment. Blessed feelings of satisfaction with Christ. Sweet power to pour out the heart before the Lord; those enablings which are better help than can be expressed; those enablings to pour out the heart, to express the trouble, to lay before the Lord the sorrows that you feel. And also the feelings of life, of love, of hope, of strength sweetly communicated, whereby you say: "I will trust and not be afraid". Or, if you are afraid, say "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee." And faith to lean on Jehovah. Trust in Jehovah for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Now all this comes from the Spirit. We lie inert, and as dead, without Him. He comes and all the motion of a spiritual kind gives by springs of fear and love. He brings the earnest of the inheritance, some part of the inheritance. We have obtained an inheritance in Christ, says Paul to the Ephesians. "In whom we have obtained an inheritance." Now some of that comes; it is put into the hand of faith. A word of life, a word of promise, given to you as an earnest of the Spirit, whereby you realise that you have an inheritance in heaven and your heart is fixed upon it. Well this presence is in the absolute promise of God; it is in Christ; what a mercy.

Now a few words let me say about the nature of these absolute promises. They are immutable, cannot be broken, cannot pass unfulfilled. They are just absolutely immutable. And whence do they derive this character? First from the very nature of God. He is "God that cannot lie". O you trust immutability when you trust in Jehovah, Jehovah Jesus. Every word is sure. The heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, but, says the Psalmist: "Thou art the same". And this eternity, immutability of God, is communicated to His people, to His promise; it cannot be broken. By two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie He has condescended to afford strong consolation to all who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. The immutability of the promise is derived from the very nature, the immutability of God.

Secondly it is derived from the Covenant. "My Covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips". And if

you have got one syllable of a promise in your heart you cannot die disappointed of the hope that that wrought in you when it was spoken nor can the view of God which was given to you by it be obliterated. It may go from you for a moment, as it were, as the Lord may - "For a small moment have I forsaken thee" and when He goes, all things go as to our enjoyment - but it will come again. "Thy walls are continually before Me." "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." Nothing can alter this. Not my sins? No. What will the Lord do? Chasten you, but not forsake you. That is the wonder; chasten you but not forsake you. He will never forget you. Forget thee, I will not, I cannot, He says. His promise is immutable because it is in the Covenant and the Covenant is sealed with blood. The blood of the everlasting covenant renders sure to all the seed the promises. Think of it: "All the promises of God are in Him yea, and in Him Amen" In Him, the Son of God incarnate. And, as Paul speaks in another place, so it is: "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began." There it is. The fountain is there; the little streams reach us from it. The fountain is full, never to be exhausted. Nothing that God does can exhaust Him. Nothing that you experience of a Scripture can exhaust that Scripture. It is an ever full word; no matter how much you have found of it in your soul's sweet experience it remains as full as when you first began to draw consolation from it. We are very apt - at least I have been - to think that one fulfilment of a promise is all the promise has in it, but that is not so. The word of promise has multiple fulfilments, many, many fulfilments; exceeding great in their nature, exceeding great in their contents, exceeding great in their faithfulness, exceeding great in the certainty of the realisation of them by those to whom they belong, to whom they are given. Happy, O happy sinner, in whose heart lives a promise, for it must be fulfilled.

Now briefly, and lastly, the Apostle has an astonishing word here. "Unto the glory of God by us". We might take it in two ways, first respecting the ministry. God is glorified in the ministry when Christ is set up according to Scripture; when the Scripture doctrine of Christ is expounded. When a minister is enabled to lift up the Lamb of God, and say to the wondering audience: "Behold the Lamb of God" God is glorified. I wish He may be glorified here in that

respect much more than He ever has been by me. Secondly, we may say, the promises being fulfilled in our heart's experience will bring glory to God. You can never have one realisation of one promise and not be, in that realisation, unto the glory of God. He puts a stamp on a soul when He fulfils the promise in that soul. He puts the indelible mark of His own goodness and power and love on that sinner. Have you had a promise fulfilled? O, you were in that, for the glory of God and will be to the end of the world and through eternity. What a great thing it is to have heard the voice of God from heaven and live. What an amazing thing that the God of heaven should ever have opened His mouth, so to speak, and spoken to your souls, to my soul. The condescension of it, the love of it, the greatness of it, the wonder of it, the power of it. And then, that any word spoken by the living God to us should have been fulfilled in us, in any measure; O, the glory of God here; O the glory he puts on a sinner, the sweetness He gives to that sinner. "Unto the glory of God by us". You may say sometimes, we shall never be able to live to His glory, but He can set you up as a monument that will glorify Him by fulfilling in you His promise, forgiving your sins, blessing you with peace, and ruling you by His love; setting you in His dear Son, giving you to sit with Him in heavenly places, in heavenly things, and opening to you what eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man. These mercies, these acts of grace and power, make the glory of God, if I may use such a word, visible on you, visible that is to Himself, and I will venture to add, visible to every spiritual man who knows you. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things" and he can judge what is for the glory of God in a gracious experience.

Now I have gone through these points briefly. Each one is worthy, I was going to say, of a life ministry. Each one is full enough, only I have neither grace nor ability to expound these things as they deserve to be expounded, but I have drawn your attention to them and may the Lord fix your attention on them and open them and speak them to you that they may become yours in experience.

AMEN.