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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 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"

The occasion of these words appears to be that the Apostle had, at some time, intimated to the Corinthian Church his intention to see them on his way to Macedonia and again on his way from Macedonia unto Judea. In the first epistle he said he would come to them a second time shortly if the Lord permitted. Some of his enemies - he had enemies in that church - because he did not fulfil to the letter that intention - the Lord not permitting him - accused him of lightness and inconstancy; that he had promised what he did not perform. He speaks to them concerning this accusation: "In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia and to come again out of Macedonia unto you and of you be brought on my way toward Judea." That was his intention. "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?" Was I frivolous? Had I my eye on another object when I was looking to you? No. "Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay". He steadfastly desired their good and intended to seek that and impart to them a second benefit if the Lord will. That was his word - "If the Lord will". And his steadfastness was fixed by the highest possible subject. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea." And if my heart was steadfastly fixed, if my mind was also just on the one object alone, was it likely that I should use lightness in purposing to come to you and preach? The highest subject fixed the Apostle's mind, and a lower subject, namely his proposed, and to himself, desired visit, that the people might have, by his ministry, a second benefit. Then the Spirit uses this occasion to make this beautiful, steadfast, immutable declaration: "All the promises of God" - however my wish may be interfered with by His

providence; however my design should be crossed; however it might seem to some of you that I say yea and nay about the same thing - God's promises are firm, yea yea, without failure, weakness, or changeableness; they are yea yea, and they are this in the Lord Jesus; in Him whom we have preached, and do preach, and if I come again to you, will preach. In Him all the promises of God are yea and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us ministers and by you in whom they are fulfilled.

A promise is a declaration, written or verbal, made by one person to another; that the person making it will do, or forbear to do some certain things. A promise may be absolute or it may be conditional. If it is absolute, it is dependent entirely for its fulfilment on him who makes it. If it is conditional, its fulfilment depends largely upon the person to whom it has been made; that is upon his fulfilment of the conditions. These, not being fulfilled, would make the promise void. This is concerning a promise among men. If we apply it to God, and we may, then the promises concerning Christ and salvation by Him are absolute, and they depend wholly and alone on Him who has made them. Nothing can interfere with the fulfilment; nothing can render the fulfilment impossible or make the promise void. We cannot frustrate one single word of the living God. "Hath He said and shall He not do it?" "He is not a man that He should lie nor the son of man that He should repent." Let us remember that wondrous, that beautiful character that is given by Paul to God in Titus - "God that cannot lie". And remember also what He said to Abraham, or what rather was said in the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning the immutability of God connected with His Covenant. God was willing to give comfort and stability to the heirs of promise, and therefore did "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie" that "we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us". What a wonderful thing; two things. One word of God should be, and is in itself, sufficient, but for the comfort of those to whom He had spoken a word of counsel, He confirmed it with an oath. And by these two immutable things, His promise and His oath, the people to whom they are made over should have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that

within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Promises then, made by God, are sure to all the seed. It may be convenient for us, in respect of what I am to say by the help of the Lord, if we spoke of God's promises in these following ways

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| First | - | Promises of gifts |
| Second | - | Promises of work or works |
| Third | - | Promises of presence |

and we shall find these three in the Scriptures.

First, promises of gifts; gifts which are without repentance. Let us go to the first gift that God made over to a man, fallen Adam. The seed of the woman, He said to the serpent, "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." This is the first promise of the Messiah that was made to fallen man. Implicit in it is every blessing from incarnation and entrance into glory of Christ; from the birth of every vessel of mercy to the entrance into glory of that vessel. Everything necessary for God's glory and for the good of those concerned is implicit in that first promise. It was God's great gift. And the same is declared in the gospel of John. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the greatest gift that God had to bestow. He could give nothing better, nothing greater, nothing so great, as His only begotten Son. And from that day onward until the incarnation of Christ became an accomplished fact, type, shadow, ceremony, prophets and Psalmist, all treated of this one promise, this yea and Amen promise, that the Son of God should come in the fullness of the time. And that great word of Paul in the Galatians has an allusion to the promise of Christ coming; it speaks of it: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The fullness of the time was the time that God appointed. And that word may look, perhaps does look, back to the word of Jacob in Genesis. A lawgiver shall not depart from Judah. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from beneath his feet, until Shiloh come" This is the Messiah, promised, faithfully promised. Punctually fulfilled was the promise when the Lord Jesus Christ was born of the

virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Nothing to interfere with it. All those generations coming and going with no thought in the bulk of them perhaps of what was promised. All those vast numbers of parents passing away and yet one line preserved; Judah preserved as a tribe intact, with some authority, kingly authority, some power; kept in that condition while the ten tribes were scattered abroad and the general defection of the people had come to almost perfection. Yet that one tribe was preserved because Messiah was to come by that tribe. And as God promised - in promising blessings to Abraham - promised that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed, we see how remarkably the Lord began to do it when He brought Gentiles in. The Gentile Ruth was brought in to be a direct ancestress of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This promise therefore was sure, yea and amen. The root did come out of the stem of Jesse. The root did grow out of a dry land. Christ did come out of the tribe of Judah. Well, what a ground for confidence in a good promising God.

Now if we believe in the Fall, believe in our own guilty participation in the Fall, and its fearful consequences; if we believe in our own depravity, by the conviction and teaching of the Spirit, this yea and Amen promise will be everything in our eyes, in our desires. We shall be in that word: "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." This promise of gift includes all promises in the matter of salvation. All that is needed; needed by sinners who are called to repentance; needed by sinners who are exposed to the anger of God in their consciences; by sinners who, Adam-like, would fain, if it were possible, hide themselves in their nakedness and guiltiness, from the eye of God. Needed by those who feel their own righteousness to be as filthy rags. This promise contains all that such sinners need and feel their need of. And doubtless some such sinners are here. We need this promise. It was an absolute promise; it has been fulfilled; Christ has come. It has been partly fulfilled in the partial trampling of Satan under foot, so bruising his head in the church; partly fulfilled in some of us, as we believe; partly fulfilled in the manifestations God has favoured us with of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now feeling sin, temptation, providence may appear to contradict and say in us, you can never expect to enter into the full enjoyment of so great a

promise. Treachery, treacherous dealings in our hearts, and spirits, and lives may appear to contradict our interest in the promise of the Messiah. We may look though, on the contrary, for our edification, into that wondrous word in the Psalms: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Now if we did not come into some sense of need, if we had no sense of oppression, if we were not poor, if we were not like mown grass, parched for lack of rain; if, I say, we had no knowledge or sense of these conditions, what room would there be in us for the fulfilment of the promise? And the promises in that Psalm all relate to the Lord Jesus; they all belong to Him, and He absolutely has the fulfilment of them in His hand. He comes down sovereignly; He comes down graciously; He comes with vengeance to our enemies and salvation for us. He comes down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." So, this absolute promise of gift, may we be enabled to look at, to believe and lay hold of, and plead before the Lord. Paul renewed it in the Romans, when inspired so to do. He said to the Romans: "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". It was looked at by prophecy when Isaiah said: "The foot shall tread it down". "The lofty city" - the lofty city - "He layeth it low; He layeth it low even to the ground; The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy." When Christ had done it, then His people are allowed to do it. Because He did it, they do it. Because He fulfilled the promise, He puts them also by His side, and makes them conquerors. When He has brought the king down, He brings His people and says, now put your feet on the neck of this enemy. This is a promise then that God has fulfilled, and is fulfilling and will fulfil until the end of the world. Here is the strength of the weak, here is the victory of the defeated, the vanquished. Here is the raising of the dead, here is the salvation of the lost, here is peace to the troubled. "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9 v 7)

The promise of gift is also here, namely the gift of a new heart, and a right spirit. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh". This promise is absolute. A stone, dead, inanimate thing can never wish for this; dead sinners can never ask for life, but the washing of regeneration and the

renewing of the Holy Ghost is given sovereignly, as it was promised absolutely. "I will give you". "I will take away". I will give you a new heart, a new life, and new spirit. I will take away, as to its dominion, that heart of stone; that wicked heart shall no longer rule you. And here Satan is again bruised in his head. The god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, is dispossessed. A stronger, He has come and dispossessed him and cast out his goods and taken away his dominion and given the dominion to Him whose right it is. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, till He come whose right it is." And He has come to a sinner as the purchase of His blood and it is His right to rule in that sinner and so He begins to fulfil in the sinner that blessed promise: "I will take away the heart of stone and I will give you a heart of flesh." And this is done when the kindness and love of God appear to a sinner in the washing of regeneration; and the renewing of the Holy Ghost takes place and the grace of God appears and teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. These people are called to be saints, because grace is given to them from Him who has all grace in His hand. And when this great promise has begun to be fulfilled, then the continuance of it goes on. God carries on this blessed work of grace.

He will never never leave us
Nor will let us quite leave Him

Hence the drawings of the Father to the Son, and the movings and teachings and guidance of the Spirit of all the blessed, blood-bought train, leading them to Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people is to be. Every movement that you make God-ward, every step you take to the Lord Jesus, is the fruit of this blessed promise: "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." This is a yea and yea promise. "I will be their God". I will give them to know Me, whom to know, with My Son whom I have sent, is life eternal. And so out of the ruins of the Fall God builds up a new creation: "created in Christ Jesus unto good works". Created again in the knowledge of Him that has called you. A new creation. A kingdom never contemplated in the old kingdom; a law different from the law of Moses, different from the moral law; the law of grace and life. The promises are absolute promises of gifts and these the Apostle treats of more largely in both the 1st Epistle to

the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, he treats of the gifts and demonstrations of the Spirit. These were different in manner and in measure, but the same Spirit, and the same God worketh all and in all. And then in the Ephesians the Apostle treats of the Spirit working the gift of Christ. He speaks of the gift of Christ as being the gifts of ministers, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and so on, all for the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4 v 11-16). These blessed gifts come out of that first promise, the Seed of the woman; out of that promise made to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" in the coming of the Messiah, in the birth of the Lord Jesus of the virgin Mary. Everything, as you are led by the Spirit, you will trace up to this great centre and source of all goodness, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Yea; God would never say nay to His own promise. He will never say nay to one embraced in that promise. He will never reject one who, in the fulfilment of the promise, is drawn to Christ by the Father. "He cannot deny Himself." He is "God that cannot lie".

And included in this promise of gifts you will find many things in providence. Bread is given, water is sure. The mighty movings of God in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters, His unknown footsteps for a time, will eventually all of them declare that the people to whom He thus holds Himself, and thus walks, are having the fulfilment of His promise to them. So wait on this absolute God, and plead this absolute promise, as you can, and you will find, when you are enabled to do it, God will come to you.

And next, the promises of God are promises of works, works done in them and for them, and I shall name but one or two of those great works. We need them; we feel to need them if we are born again and are convinced of our sins.

First there is this great work of pardon. That is God's work. It is given to Him to forgive sins. He forgives iniquity. When Moses, in a sore case with the whole of Israel - for Israel had sinned grievously - was before the Lord, he said: "I beseech Thee show me Thy glory". How did God show it to him? The LORD passed by before Moses

and proclaimed and said: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty", under, and by means of, the law. That was His work to forgive sins. And the enemies of Christ, not knowing, not believing, Him to be God, were offended when He said to one that his sins were forgiven. This is God's work. "He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins". We give Him plenty to do, for "there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not". There is no poor child of His clear and clean in this matter. Daily sins need this work daily to be done. Fresh guilt, evil tempers, hasty words, hard hearts, ingratitude, wanderings, idolatries, various evils, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; they are ever with us. They were with Eve; they took possession of her when the lust of the flesh went after the apple, the forbidden fruit. The lust of the eye caught her when she saw that the tree was good and the fruit to be desired. The pride of life was in her when she saw, as she thought, she would be wise if she partook of the forbidden fruit. And these three evils are with us, ever working, ever lusting, ever moving against God and against our best interests. And am I not therefore justified in saying to you, we give Him plenty of work? Alas that it is so. And how good He is to carry on that work; to blot out our transgressions as a thick cloud, and our sins as a cloud, and working so absolutely according to His own divine rule. He comes again and again and, as it is in the Psalms, so it is known by the people of God. "Yea, many a time forgave He their iniquity and did not stir up all His wrath". What an evidence you have of forgiveness when He comes again and holds communion with you; when He scatters the cloud and it is as a morning without clouds to you. When His word is as a kind word spoken sweetly and kindly on your hearts. When He renews some old promise, and walks again in some old ways to you, in kindness and in mercy. Absolute work, kindly done, powerfully done in a sinner's conscience. This is the promise: "I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more." This is absolute. The conditional promise made to the Jewish church was broken. The church in the wilderness, they broke the Covenant. Now, said God, I will make another Covenant and I will not make it conditional with this people. I will bring in all the families of the earth and bless them

in My Son. And this is the Covenant that I will make with them; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their minds and write it in their heart. They shall no more teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother - in these, the essentials - for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest. And this shall be the ground, the foundation of it all. I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more. This is the work. How could the creature properly forgive himself for his sins? How could you cleanse yourself, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots? But this work God has reserved for Himself; the forgiveness of sins. It is a blessed promise; it is an absolute one too.

Then too we have the promise of, a mighty God to work deliverances, command deliverances, and such promises we need. We need deliverances of two kinds. Deliverances first of a spiritual kind. We need to be delivered from the power of sin. "Let not any iniquity" said the Psalmist "have dominion over me." Do you feel that? Are you afraid of sinning? Are you afraid of your heart departing from Him? Remember this; the voice that rolls the stars along speaks the promises. "Sin shall not have dominion over you". And that promise is made good whenever, in any measure, this great Captain of our salvation rebukes the devouring sin in our nature. He gives us faith to say, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God". Mind; it is not deliverance from the dominion of sin to be ignorant of sin; to be unaware of its working and its power in you, that is no deliverance; that is awful judgement. But when one feels his sinfulness, realises the power of it, and is too weak to resist it successfully, then cries to God for deliverance and the Lord comes and graciously subdues the sin or the sins which are such a trouble and mercifully brings a new sense of safety, a new sense of sweet liberty from sin's dominion, then the promise is partially fulfilled. I say partially, because the fullness of this promise we must wait for till we leave this world. O but what a wonder at any time, in any measure, to get deliverance from this mighty foe, sin in us.

We need deliverance from spiritual enemies. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." How many devils you may have about you, if the Lord has cast them out of you, you do not know. What suggestions come from the enemies of your souls; what false light may enter your mind; what heresies may be stirred up in your spirit; what anger may rise; what folly may scatter you, and all by the enemies of your souls, you do not really know, and neither do I in regard to myself. And how are we to hope for deliverance? These subtle foes, in addition to our own dreadful corruptions, how are we to hope to escape? It is not easy often, perhaps, to distinguish between what is purely your own corruption, and what is partly your own corruption and partly Satan's work, but God knows. He knows where to punish and how to punish the enemy for oppressing you, and He knows also "how to deliver the godly out of temptation". This is His promised work. "I will punish Leviathan, that crooked serpent, and the dragon that is in the sea." I will do it with My great and strong and sore sword. "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes." O, how safe is a tempted soul. How safe is a child of God when the enemy roars. How good is that blessed word: "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." And you may accommodate that word in the Psalms to this matter: "How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you; as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence." (Psalm 62 v 3). Why boastest thou thyself, O mighty man? Why do you boast of mischief? Why do you say to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain? Why boastest thou thyself in mischief;? the goodness of the Lord endureth continually. The goodness of the Lord there that endureth is the promised goodness, the promise of God to deliver and help. Therefore the enemy has no room to boast really. We shall never have any blessing in peace while the devil lives and we live here, except, and only insofar as, the Lord rebukes him. He will always perturb and disturb and distress and pursue and frighten, whenever permitted. And yet there is a promise of deliverance, a blessed, an immutable promise of deliverance. Nothing can shake it; we get shaken, the promise is firm. We wonder; the Lord sees the end from the beginning. Rest in His promise. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Then in the next place there is the promise of mighty works in providence. Look at some of the dangers, external dangers, of Israel and see the promises made to them. He shall not come into this city; he shall not shoot an arrow into this city. The enemy looked on the quiet and defenceless cities and he said these two cities shall be mine, whereas the Lord was there; he did not know that. And we get into trouble; God sends affliction and the enemy. The affliction may seem to be an enemy, desperate and set upon our destruction. There may appear to be no way of deliverance for us. We may wonder why the Lord has done this evil. It was so with Jeremiah. "Lord", said he, "Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived. Wilt Thou be altogether as a liar unto me, as waters that fail?" The Lord had told Jeremiah that his enemies would fight against him but that they should not prevail against him, yet they seemed to prevail. What then? One of old said, long before Jeremiah - And what wilt Thou do unto Thy great Name? If these enemies prevail, what wilt Thou do? Thou hast made this nation Thine; has promised to make them Thy peculiar treasure; what if they are all slain? What wilt Thou do unto Thy great Name? Now if God has promised you good, and He brings evil; if He has promised you peace and He brings trouble; your old nature will say just what Jeremiah did, though you may not utter his words: Lord, wilt Thou be altogether as a liar unto me? I did hope in Thy promise. Jeremiah was promised prevalence and yet he went down, by the power of his enemies, into the low dungeon and sank into the mire. Now God's promise comes in. He overturns, and overturns, and overturns until He comes whose right it is. This promise is sure. Earth, with all its powers, contingencies, with all their terrors, men with all their devices, and devils with all their counsels, shall not make void one word of God's promise. There is very likely not a child of God here who has not had some time when providence has seemed to contradict the promise, seemed to make the fulfilment of the promise impossible. The dead Abraham, the dead Sarah, so to speak, had a child promised them. Nature said, it cannot be. Faith said, it shall be done; the promise is sure; rest in His promise; rest in the Lord; rest in His immutability. The immutability of the promise and of the oath we have set before us, and as we flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, we find strong consolation coming. Do not judge the Lord by providences. Judge not His heart by the working of His hand always. Judge not His promise by what you may be at present feeling

and experiencing. His promise will come up in time, will come to the top, come to the front, and, if I may so speak, assert itself, and its authority, and its immutability, and its firmness. Yea, it will tell you that it is more full of goodness than providence is of evil, and more sure of fulfilment than you are able to believe, for God is able, even in these particulars, to do exceeding abundantly above all that ye ask or think. Friends, we rest upon a Rock when we rest on God's Word. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall not pass away. It cannot. If you ever have had one blessed word given to you concerning your path, though that word had in it what you knew not, what you thought not of - difficulty, trouble, affliction, tribulation - yet it had also more than you ever believed of mercy; wisdom to guide, power to defend, and faithfulness to fulfil every jot and tittle. God is punctilious in His fulfilment of His promises, but our time is always ready; His not always ready. "All the promises", all of them, yes, all of them; not one shaken, not one shaketh. And Joshua's testimony will be that of every observant, living, exercised child of God eventually: "Not one word of all His good promise hath failed", not one. These promises take in everything in providence that we can need, everything we can be troubled with and about; the anxiety as to what we shall eat and what we shall drink; unbelief as to what will become of us, and what the Lord will do; these promises embrace everything. Therefore rest on Jehovah for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. His character is at stake, His honour is involved in every promise that He has made to His dear people. Yea, I will do it; Amen, it shall be done. Failure never attached itself to God; never can. "God that cannot lie". He has pledged Himself by two immutable things to His people, and He inspired Paul to pledge Him to His people. "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." O then, wait on Him. There is nothing at all of uncertainty in any word that He has spoken. Let me again quote what Dr Watts so finely says: "The voice that rolls the stars along speaks all the promises". Why do not the stars fail? Because He knows them and because He has an infinite understanding and power. And, putting this before His people, He encourages them to look to Him though they are faint and weary; to wait on Him in all things and at all times. "For all the promises of God are yea, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us."

Here I leave it; may the Lord graciously help us to believe in Him and His Word.

AMEN.