

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 3 March 1929

2 KINGS 19 verses 30-31

"And the remnant that is escaped of the house
of Judah shall yet again take root
downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of
Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and
they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal
of the Lord of Hosts shall do this."

The state of Israel and of Judah at this time was very evil. The king of Assyria had already removed Israel, taken Israel and placed the people in cities of his own nation, and the little house of Judah was now beseiged. Jerusalem was invested (laid seige to) and the people were in a great strait. And Sennacherib sent his chief captain Rab-shakeh and uttered the blasphemies against God which are recorded in this chapter and the chapter preceding. The king of Assyria boasts here of what he had done to other nations, how he had destroyed them and their gods and asks, profanely, blasphemously, whether Hezekiah can reasonably expect that his God will deliver him, and he reckoned not on God. Hezekiah was enabled to go up to the temple and lay the whole matter before the Lord, and the letter of blasphemy which was sent. The providence of God so ordered it that another nation, the Egyptian nation, should go and move against Assyria. So the king had to go away from Jerusalem. Now said Rab-shakeh, do not expect that you will escape, for I shall return, and that letter was spread before the Lord. All this history you are acquainted with. Very interesting it is when you view it as being, not only God's work in that particular case, but as having a bearing, as I believe it has, on the Lord's people in all ages. And the deliverance, singular and mighty and perhaps, by Hezekiah himself, almost unthought of for its greatness and completeness at that time, the deliverance speaks to God's people, and the text is that, so to speak, culminating point in this particularly interesting part of Scripture. "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of

Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this." A singular thing it was and very beautiful. In the 29 verse "This" said the Lord by the prophet to Hezekiah "This shall be a sign unto thee", a sign, that is, that I am with you to deliver you, and that I will deliver this city from the hand of Assyria. "This shall be a sign unto thee. Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof." The mighty enemy, the Assyrian army had doubtless devastated the country round about. There had been no harvest, no sowing, no reaping during that time, and now has God scattered that army. He says, Isaiah tell Hezekiah this, go into this devastated region and you will find that the corn that was trodden down of that army shall spring up, and you shall eat of that. Yea, the second year you shall eat of it, yea into the third year, until that which you, in the third year sow, shall ripen and you shall gather it. No human means; God's power alone seen in this great thing. This is the external part of the text. The internal part, which belongs to the Lord's people, I would, if He will kindly help me, draw your attention to.

"The remnant". A solemn word, a remnant. "Lord" said the disciples to Him "Are there few that be saved?" He said "Strive to enter in at the strait gate". If one should say, there won't be many in Galeed that will get to heaven, the living in the place would be heard saying in their hearts, "Lord, may we be among the few". Is not that so? Do not some of you find yourselves saying that? O that we may be right with God. O that we may know the Lord Jesus. May the Lord stir us up to this Scripture "Strive to enter". There is a remnant according to the election of grace. Sin has ruined the world, sin has brought death and damnation to the vast multitude of men in all nations, but Christ has come and He said, in reply to the question "Are there few that be saved?" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate". God knows who shall be saved. He knows the many that will be lost. He sees, because He has made it a strait and narrow way and gate. He sees the broad way and the wide gate, but says to His poor people now "Strive to enter in at the strait gate". "The remnant". Is it a hopeless word? I think it is a very hopeful word. May it seem so to you, a hopeful word. It means this, that notwithstanding the

power of sin, notwithstanding the deceivings of the devil, in the whole world there shall be saved a remnant. Some shall come to the knowledge of God, some shall be plunged into the fountain of the Saviour's blood, some shall receive His righteousness. And you who have a desire that way, strive to enter into these mysteries. "And the remnant that is escaped", escaped a threatened destruction, an impending judgment, an apparently inevitable death. You that have escaped. Thus far we have escaped the sin that is in us, the devils that are about, the destructions of God's providence, the many things that the Word of God has to say against us, the sword of justice that has apparently been pointed at us, and the death that we have thought inevitable. We have escaped thus far. Why have we escaped? Why have we escaped? No prowess of our own, no skill, no sword, no wisdom, no goodness. Why have we escaped? Why did Judah escape as a remnant, when Israel, the ten tribes, God took away in His wrath and scattered them? Because Thou hadst a favour to us. The Psalmist said "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, nor by their own arm, but because Thou hadst a favour to them". And every escaped sinner finds a refuge, a refuge in the Lord Jesus, a sanctuary in the wilderness, finds the favour of God. They find the sweet favour of God, the light shining into their heart, the word of truth spoken to them, manifestations of mercy given to them. They have escaped; what a favour.

"And they shall yet again take root downward". Withered, plucked up as it seems, even by the root, this people, this remnant, they shall not be carried into captivity. They shall not plant themselves there and take root there, but they have escaped and they shall come into their own villages and land about, and take root again. The enemy has plucked them up, seemingly without any hope for the future, but now they shall take root downward in their own land, and this may mean, in the Spirit, that the people of God shall again and again, after all their devastation, withering trials and the besieging of their enemies, take still deeper root downward. I believe I am right when I say that the desolations that the people of God experience, and the withering which they are the subjects of from time to time have this ending that, desolate, weak, poor and withered, they are led by the Holy Ghost to take root into the sovereign grace of God, into the atoning blood of Christ, into His

justifying righteousness, into the covenant of grace, into the sure mercies of David; they root themselves there, under the teaching of the eternal Spirit. Our enemies are turned into friends in a sense. They bring withering and trouble and death in our experience, but God turns this experience into His glory, by leading us to go as more and more ruined, weaker and weaker and more sensibly lost than ever, to the Lord Jesus. Jerusalem, it is said by Jeremiah "shall be builded upon her own heap". (Jeremiah 30 v 18). The Lord will have mercy on the tents of Jacob, and Jerusalem "shall be builded upon her own heap" She shall not go into another land to be built, she shall be built where she was built, and she shall be rebuilt and renewed. And this is taking root downward in their own land. What a ground to strike the roots of faith in, we have. What a ground we have, dear friends. Look at self - and you will do that very often as you are led of the Spirit - and what will you see there? A "heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked". Look around you and you will see a world at enmity with God. Now the Holy Ghost turns you another way and you see the Saviour of the lost, you see the High Priest of your profession, you see the God of all grace. And faith, seeing Him, takes hold, which is taking root downward. Let us look a little at this in one or two particulars. First of all look at - and indeed this is seen by the Lord's people - the barrenness, the ignorance of our own nature, the wickedness of a heart that is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked". Now this, as seen and felt, will be painful, on account of the leanness and withering of our souls. Every sin that prevails is a withering; every lust that prevails is a death on the spirit and a separation from God. "Your sins have separated between you and your God." Now when the Holy Ghost comes and sees a mourner, mourning over his barrenness and his withered condition, and tells him in his teaching that he must never expect anything better in himself, but that there is a blessed Saviour whose atoning blood and justifying righteousness are sufficient for him, then, like a plant well planted in good soil, the faith of that sinner lays hold of the Son of God. Said Paul to Timothy - "Lay hold of eternal life whereunto thou art also called." Now here then is a ground into which faith will go and strike her roots from time to time.

Death's within thee, all about thee,
But the remedy's without thee
See it in thy Saviour's blood

Take a poor sinner in his own rags, and he will find there no ground of hope of justification. But when by faith he perceives the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, his faith takes hold of that, and in spite of all his filthy rags, he has a good hope of standing before God without blame, blemish, spot or any such thing. Take the ravages of temptations, the seasons wherein you find a kind of tempest, a withering, drying, the east wind of temptation, so that not only are the branches stripped of fruit and leaf, but even the root itself seems to be withering, dying. And when it pleases God, after a season, to rebuke the enemy, what is the fruit, the result? It is this, that the Holy Ghost gives a sinner faith to take root in that blessed One who resisted and overcame the devil. Gracious omnipotence becomes the ground in which faith strikes her roots deeper and deeper, and the sinner says, though I am always open and subject to temptation, and have no hope of escaping by my own wisdom and power, here is a captain of salvation, here is a mighty Saviour, and then faith lays hold there. You take again, what a sinner often finds, a faithlessness in himself. What an illustration of this is the typical church, always turning away from God. The captivities of Israel are explained painfully, truly, in their sins. They provoked the Lord, they provoked Him to jealousy, and they provoked Him to remove them out of their land. Unfaithfulness! Why, it belongs to us; it is natural to us to be unfaithful to God - natural. I know that there is no living soul here that would contradict that. Therefore there is no room for confidence in self, no ground into which you can cast a root and say, I hope that, at any rate for the future, I shall be more cautious, and I will be more faithful. I will cleave to the Lord closer. No, you are driven out of self-confidence. Every child of God is driven out of self-confidence. That is a rudiment the Apostle speaks in the Philippians - "We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh". What then can be said of a sinner who has escaped eternal death, and has escaped from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; who has escaped from the heresies of his own nature, and the heresies that are about him? Why, this, that he has

got a ground revealed in him, a faithful covenant making, covenant keeping God, and in Him his faith takes hold. It lays hold of His faithfulness. Have not some of you said at times "I trust His gracious character". It seems to me that when the Lord's people get older, the character of God, as revealed to them, meets their cases very exactly and precious, and they find, as they are led necessarily to distrust themselves, they are led blessedly by the Spirit to trust a faithful God. They do not live on their feelings - they are glad to have gracious feelings - but they are led to trust a faithful God in the face of everything that is destructive. Judah escaped. There was a remnant and God, in His faithfulness, preserved that remnant. And the remnant today escapes on the same ground, a good and a faithful God. An increasing knowledge of self in the saint leads, by the Spirit's grace and mercy, to an increasing knowledge of God as a Saviour in all particulars. You cannot - if you are wise, you will not - trust yourself for a minute. If you are wise, you won't say, I could not do this, or I would not do that. You may hear of professors living badly in this and in that particular, and as you are led of God you will never say, I could not do it. If you are kept from that you will say "God kept me". You have got the same nature, the same propensity, the same tendency to evil, and the only thing between you and destruction, you will gladly and thankfully own, to be the grace of God in Christ, the faithfulness of God in the covenant. They take root downward. O how increasingly precious does the Holy Ghost make the grace of God to a sinner. What meaning that Scripture may have to some of you - "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness". What a blessed word God may make this to you - "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" The promises of God in Christ are ground into which your faith will sink deeper and deeper and yet deeper in order that you may be preserved from the evil of your own fallen nature. "Grace, 'tis a charming sound". Now, dear friends, that part of the text you will, as having been taught of God, go with and say, perhaps, we wish we had more faith to strike into that ground, so good, so abundant, so fruit giving. Full of all fructifying virtue is this ground into which faith does strike deeper.

And what is one effect? "And bear fruit upward". Fruit borne is to the glory of God the Father. And what shall we call fruit? The

fruit will declare the goodness and virtue of the soil. The fruit will say, now that branch was not so virtuous as to manage to bear fruit. It will say, the root bore that branch, the virtue of the root is seen in the fruit and the glory must be God's. Yea, and every saint is determined that God shall have the glory. God will have it, and the saint says, He shall have it. But the fruit, the fruit of faith. You will find this to be one part of the fruit, that Christ will become more and more precious to you - "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". There is a preciousness in Christ that no tongue is able to express. There is a preciousness in Him in the soul's feeling as faith lays hold of Him. He is precious in the very desire of Him, precious by virtue of the most distant view of Him. He is precious in the Names He bears, in the work He did, in the redemption He accomplished, in the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Precious in His resurrection and precious in His intercession in heaven. There is that in Him, that value, that mercy, that efficacy, that completeness which He makes over to His people, so that whenever faith is in exercise, the sinner says, "He is precious to my soul". Yea, you may feel Him to be precious when you would not dare to say "My Lord and my God". I think the feeling of preciousness you will see, if you have eyes, in the language, in the confession, of Peter. "Will ye also go away?" said Christ to His disciples. O, said Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And again, when the Lord would wash Peter's feet, and Peter said to Him "Thou shalt never wash my feet". Such condescension I cannot submit to. But when Christ said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me", how Peter's faith and love sprang up into exercise and he said "O Thou art precious to my soul"; that was the language of his spirit. Thou art precious to my soul. And when writing that Epistle he put that feeling of his soul into words "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". That is fruit, only men may not see it. You would not think perhaps of uttering a word to any child of God about that feeling; it is in your heart, a secret between you and God, a preciousness which He notices, with which He is much pleased. He is much pleased with the exercise of faith on His Son. You will honour Christ here. There is a word in the gospel according to John and very important and good it is to find yourself straight with it - This is the Father's will "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John 5 v 23)

It is good to find you are honouring Christ as the Eternal God, the Eternal Son, the Eternal Rock, the Eternal Redeemer. Honouring Him in His eternal Deity, and in all that work which, as the almighty God incarnate, He accomplished. Did you ever feel that? Now if that is God's will, and you are brought to honour the Son as you honour the Father, see what fruit it is. This is the fruit of faith arising from the root of faith fixing in Jesus Christ. Then fruit upward is this - obeying the blessed gospel of God. There is a word which I have named to you at times, and I would like to name it again. Speaking of the work of God as a warfare, the apostle says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Well, perhaps if you lay yourselves by the side of that word you will say, O I have multitudes of thoughts that are so many libertines, but they have never been brought into subjection. But now, look at the leading matter. Here is a man who says - "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are or even as this publican", and here is the publican at his side. He goes to the temple tremblingly and says "God be merciful to me a sinner". What is Christ's purpose? To save his people from their sins. What was the publican's heart? A broken heart lying straight with the will of God in Christ. His thoughts, so far, at that time were in subjection to Christ. Can you go with that? If in providence things are against you, you may, like Hezekiah, go before God and spread the matter out and feel enabled to say, "Thy will be done" What is that? Having your thoughts brought into subjection, into captivity, held as captives, to the Lord Jesus. That is fruit, bearing fruit upward, and "Herein" says Christ, in John's gospel, "is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit". When you find yourself under a heavenly constraint to praise God and give thanks to Him for salvation and for mercies and for deliverances, what do you do? Listen! "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me, and to him that ordereth his speech aright will I show the salvation of God". That is fruit, bearing fruit upward. That is called making melody in your heart unto the Lord. That is called, again in the Hebrews, bringing "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of your lips....." They shall bear fruit upward. Mind the root, mind the ground in which the root strikes itself, and when you have got the

root and got the ground, then look for the fruit. "Bear fruit upward". It means literally in this case, that Judah, so far reduced, should go again into the devastated parts of the country and multiply, that they should be increased as they had increased. I will increase them as they have increased. Jerusalem "shall be builded upon her own heap" "and their nobles shall be of themselves". Nothing outside, nothing extraneous, just all the work of God. Now do you increase? It is said that "the trees of the Lord are full of sap". That may be a very trying word to some of you. It is to me at times. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap". Why, you say, I am a withered creature. Well, if it be so, God grant that you may be led to this "Take root downward". ".....they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon". (Hosea 14 v 7) The effect of grace; mighty effectual sovereign grace shall produce this fruitfulness. Out of self we have to go. The increase is of God, the increase is of God.

Now one word more and I close. "They shall take root downward and bear fruit upward" in respect of a holy life. "Be ye holy for I am holy". "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". It does not mean that infinite perfection which alone belongs to God, but that you should walk in the steps of the Lord Jesus. Follow Him according to His gracious teaching and work in your own souls. "Be ye holy", that is "separate". Be ye separate from all evil as I am separate. And this you will find in two things. First, internally; your very soul will again and again be brought into a loathing of sin as discovered to you to be in yourselves. I think, nay I know in a small measure, that that is a part of the work of grace, that a man, in whom grace at any moment prevails, does hate himself. He hates his life, he loses his life, he takes up his cross of self-denial, and follows the Lord. And then the second thing is, it will be an external matter, that is to say you will live in a way of separation from all known evil, and if you want to know what evil is and know evil, the Scripture will tell you, the Spirit will show you, and, as you root in Christ, so you will find that your hearts and your conduct will agree in some measure with Holy Scripture. And they shall go forth out of Zion, this remnant, and they shall increase as they have increased. "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts" - the zeal of the Lord, that is His determination - "shall do this". He will see to it.

Here we have to hang on God, and none but Jesus can accomplish this mighty thing. May He grant it to us.

AMEN.