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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton, on Wednesday evening 14 October 1936.

ACTS 5 verse 31.

Him hath God exalted with His right-hand, to be a
Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel
and forgiveness of sins.

The mortification, the fear of judgment falling on them, the Pharisees and Saducees manifested, after the resurrection of Christ, and the preaching, with such mighty results, of the Apostles. Their consciences were not easy. That, they manifested by their words - "Ye intend to bring this Man's blood upon us". God's enemies are not always left easy. He may, and often has done, sent an army of terrors and fears into their consciences. It would appear, that this was the case with the Pharisees and Saducees, the High Priests and chief priests, and the council in Jerusalem. They saw the effect of the preaching, and the miracles of the Apostles, and determined if possible to stop that preaching, but they found it impossible. When they could not for the moment prevent the Apostles preaching, they determined again to attempt it, so they put them in prison. No person can hold a servant of God, when God will use him. So these Apostles were released in the night, or early morning, and told to go and stand in the temple, and preach all the words of this life, which meant the resurrection of Jesus Christ, with other doctrines. And the Apostle Peter and the other Apostles, when they were arraigned again before these men and told they were not to preach, said - We ought to obey God rather than man. That commission brought trouble, and it still brings trouble, in some form when the servants of the Most High God are made useful. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree". What a statement. What irritation, what anger it stirred up in the hearts of these men. When they heard it, they were cut to the heart. You read in the second chapter of the Acts, of the preaching of Peter being a word that pricked the people in their hearts. A saving prick, a touch of the power, the entrance of the light of God brought salvation. Here these men were cut to, or through, the heart, by the solemn declaration of Peter and the other Apostles - "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree", charging them immediately with the murder of the Lord Jesus. "Him," they go on to say, "Him, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree, whose sacred body you

attempted to retain in the sepulchre, Him hath God exalted with His right-hand. In spite of all that you can say, all that you attempt, all that you do, God hath exalted Him with His right-hand, given Him, as the Apostle teaches in the Philippians, a Name which is above every name, a name that every tongue shall confess, before which every knee shall bow. Is it not an amazing display of the love and goodness of God, that He has laid hold of some of us and caused us to kneel before Him in Christ, and with our tongue confess to the Eternal Deity of Christ, to the sacred humanity of Christ, these two being One Person. How ought we to praise God for this. Who slew our enmity? Who enlightened our eyes? Who illuminated our understandings? We should bless God for grace, when we are in a low condition. We should thank Him for grace. He does not change with our ever changing frames, and we are exhorted to hold fast the beginning and the rejoicing of our hope, firm unto the end. Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. The Saviour does not change when we change. His word to us is not less true when we are in the dark, and doubtful about it, than when we rejoice in it. His arm is the same whether we feel it or not. Let us look at this exaltation. Him hath God exalted with His right-hand. The Man, these men spoke of - You mean to bring this man's blood upon us - that same Person, God His Father took out of the grave into heaven and gives Him, as Christ Himself taught, all power in heaven and in earth, which means His universal authority and reign. If the faith of a feeble child of God is enabled to look at that and lay hold of that, it will be a powerful encouragement to him. He has an almighty arm to lean on. He has universal authority to look to, a king to protect him, a priest to intercede for him, a ruler to hold him up and fight his battles for him, above all principalities and power, and might and dominion and every name that is named. Christ is above all things. Angels and powers are made subject to Him. O poor tried child of God, to trust Him endeavour. Look to Him. The exaltation has a great purpose.

First, to be a prince, intimating power and wealth and Christ answers to them both. He is the Prince of Life. All blessed power is in His hand. His eternal love and wisdom and grace and goodness He manifests, because He is a prince. Ezekiel tells of this Prince sitting in the gate looking to the east and speaks of His distributing gifts. If He give a gift to any of His servants it shall be theirs until the year of Jubilee. Do any of you ever fear that God may have given you something and it is not given to you as a son but as a servant. That may alarm some child or children of God. They may think

they have light, but not the light of life, that they have a kind of religion, but not that religion which God gives to His children, and what they have shall be taken from them, even that th t they have shall be taken from them. But if the Prince give a gift to any of His children it shall be theirs by inheritance for ever. If you have received a good thing from Christ as one of his children, it is yours for ever. A word, a touch, a look from Himself, a kind influence wrought in you by the Holy Spirit; yours for ever in the effect of it. You may lose the feeling and sweetness and power of it, but He never takes back that. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He is a Prince and a Saviour.

A saviour. It is a wonderful word. A Saviour. A relative word, that is to say, it relates to some people and it relates to some condition they are in. That condition is lost. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Lost on the dark mountains of sin and error and death. Nobody could find them but the Shepherd, the Saviour, and He goes on these mountains to seek and to save his lost sheep. God hath exalted Him with His right-hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. If you feel lost, if you feel you cannot help yourself, if you could sing from your heart - If my soul were sent to hell, Thy righteous law approves it well, and if you have got a cry in your heart - Lord save or I perish - this Saviour will seek and search you out and you will find Him by His finding you. This exaltation and these wonderful offices have a great purpose in the text. Him hath God exalted with His right-hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Repentance means a change of mind. That is the meaning of the word repentance - a change of mind. The character of the change depends upon who works it. If you change your mind, you remain just what you were in your nature. You have no better thoughts, though they may be different thoughts from what you had before. They arise from your nature. From profanity, you may have religious feelings, but they are your own, very solemn. Esau sold his birth-right, despised it, and he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. When Christ gives repentance, there is something wonderful. He gives a new and a right spirit. He takes away a heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh. He takes away the blind heart and gives an understanding heart. He kills enmity and gives friendship. This is what He does. He gives a new heart, new views of God, new views of sin, new views of the law, new views of yourself. 'Tis a radical change, a mighty change, according to His

power. Great His nature, great His grace. Christ gives repentance. "Repentance" Hart sings, "is a gift bestowed, to save a soul from death" and this is what the Apostle here speaks about, repentance. It is in another chapter "repentance toward God" Repentance toward God is a wonderful thing. It means your face is set toward God. Your eyes are on God, your thoughts are about God. Your eyes are on yourself, not to justify yourself, but to take a bad heart, wicked thoughts, abominations, hypocrisy, deceit, everything that is bad in you, to take all to God in humble confession. It is toward God, not toward yourself to try to mend a bad case, to make a sinner a saint, but toward God, to honour Him. Every repenting soul that has this gift of repentance from God, honours God. Down you sink, in your own estimation. "Behold I am vile" said Job. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." That is just what repentance toward God always brings when it is given by Christ. It is one of those gifts He never repents of. It continues during the whole life of a christian, from the moment he receives it till he gets away, so to speak, from this world. Repentance is a part of his religion. The Apostle John teaches this. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. If we confess our sins, not if we have confessed them, but if we go on confessing them. Confession, it belongs to the whole of the life of a child of God. Very gloomy, one says. Is it gloomy? I would like to be gloomy all the days of my life. It is not a dismal thing. It is spiritual. It is holy. There is a sinful knowledge of sin, when a man says I am a sinner and has no hatred to it, but even goes and practices it. There is a holy knowledge of sin, when a man says - I am vile, what can God do with me. And the more he is gospelled by the Spirit of God bringing the gospel to him, the deeper and more spiritual is his repentance. It is not such a gloomy thing as it is by most men named. A sinner may repent and sing, rejoice and be ashamed. I believe that. I know that I have never been more sorry for my sins than when I have been assured of the pardon of them. The more God is with you, with me, the more we shall be sorry that we are sinners, that we ever dishonoured Him, ever sinned against Him, and one sweet attraction heaven has for sinners who are loved and blessed is that there they will never, never sin but, from the rivers of His grace, drink endless pleasures in. O repenting saints the Saviour own. To give repentance. A sweet gift, a blessed gift, a free gift, never repented of, and the repentance that is given by Him is not

repented of. He never repents giving it, and they never repent feeling it.

But that is not all. To give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. What did it cost Christ to have power to forgive sins? It cost Him wounds and blood and smart and death. He must be slain and hanged on a tree by wicked hands, but also, which is blessed indeed, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The death of Christ was the death of sin to the election of grace. The death of Christ made an end of sin, brought in everlasting righteousness and set free all prisoners who were purchased by His own blood.

Forgiveness as a doctrine is just that and the doctrine is a precious doctrine. I hope God will never leave any of His children here or anywhere to count the doctrine of forgiveness a dry doctrine. It is not a dry doctrine. It is full of the moisture of heaven, of the love of God, of the death of Christ, of the grace of the Spirit. The doctrine of forgiveness is a heavenly doctrine.

Let us look at the experience of it, for this is a gift. To give repentance, not to have it in Himself only, but to shed it abroad, and to give forgiveness, not to be able to forgive only, but to actually forgive, really and actually forgive a sinner. This is very wonderful. I have had many years of trouble with sin. I have been troubled today with sin, but I am not in despair. I believe in the forgiveness of my sins. God has spoken it to me if I am not deceived more than once. It is a wonderful light. It is a penetrating light. It is the sentence of the Holy Ghost bringing the blood of Christ into the conscience. It is a heavenly feeling that your sins are gone, are taken from you. It is living, it may be for a very short time, but it is living under a sense that God has no quarrel with you and that you now have no quarrel with Him. I have quarelled with God and He has quarelled with me. O but the change, when the Holy Ghost shines into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Wonder of all wonders that such a sinner can be forgiven, is forgiven. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and as a cloud thy sins. What a word. He does it for His own sake. When people are ashamed of themselves, of their sins, by the grace of the Spirit of God in them, then the Holy Ghost shows them the Lord Jesus as having made an end of sin, having destroyed the works of the devil which He was sent to do, and if the Lord does not reprove you for your sins but sweetly speaks forgiveness of them into your heart, what a heaven you have. A sweet heaven. Now this has an amazing effect on the soul.

If ever a child of God sincerely, deeply, fully hates sin, it is when his sin is forgiven. When he is sure it will never hurt him, O how he hates it. This is a clean point in experience, and you understand it, you can bear witness to the truth of what I say, who have had it. The nearer you are to God, the more hateful is your sin to you. The more you see of the sorrow, anguish, curse, desertion of Christ by His Father and His death, the more you love Him, and the more you hate that which pierced Him through and through and broke His heart.

He gives this gift, a free gift. The word free is wonderful when you have it connected with forgiveness. He asks no price for this. There could not be a price offered for this. His own heart's blood could never be valued by any creature. The Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself. The infinite God gave Himself, for a guilty creature to make a worm better and holier than an angel, to make a polluted wretch just pure. Is it not wonderful that the gospel reveals this truth and the Holy Ghost brings it to the soul. Now some of you may be longing, you may be saying of my words, he is right above us, but then this is the mercy for you and for me that we are not required to rise up to this. No, the Holy Ghost is sent to bring it, to put it as a treasure into an earthen vessel, to smile on the soul and give a part of heaven below, a solid, if I may use such an expression, a solid piece of heaven. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. That is a great word. I have had a long time of trouble with sin in my own experience but I have had sweetness in the forgiveness of it. No man can fully express it. What it is for the conscience, burdened, defiled, filthy, to be suddenly, powerfully, relieved of all that and forgiveness spoken. When the sin is sought for, it is not found. God said I will cast their sins behind My back, into the depths of the sea. A remarkable expression, intended, as I believe, to show to us that the sins which we have carried so long, are now beyond our reach. Something thrown into the sea, not far from the shore, may be soon washed up again, but when God casts the sins of a sinner behind His back into the depths of the sea, depths you cannot fathom, depths into which the light never comes, for there are depths of the sea that never have light, so is forgiveness. You will never see your sins again, if God casts them into the depths of the sea.

Then one says, but I do remember them. Yes, you will when they are forgiven, and God is pacified toward you. He says, you shall never open your mouth again for shame when I am pacified toward thee,

never. The forgiven sinner does not know how to hide his shamed face and yet he looks to the Lord and is not ashamed. They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. Think of it, you before God, without shame. One says, I do not think I can ever receive it. If you get forgiveness, you will receive it. You will understand it then, that Christ is your light, Christ gives you your purity. The Holy Spirit brings the knowledge of that and so you are not ashamed. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me" This is as the waters of Noah unto Me, that 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. Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shall not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. Think of it dear friends, God says all these things. They are not made up by the sinner. They are brought to him. He hears them. He feels them. And this is what Christ was exalted to do, to give a sinner this gift. He puts it into his heart. He sheds this great, wonderful atonement into the heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost and that makes a child of God know that he is a child of God and enables him, more or less distinctly to say with the Apostle John "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. And this is liberty. This is gospel liberty. The soul goes free. They shall walk up and down in My Name saith the Lord. Plenty of room there. The Name of the Lord, a strong tower, a refuge, the Sun of righteousness - room.

Now may the Lord bring this to you and to me from time to time. "Him hath God exalted with His right-hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Amen.