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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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DEUTERONOMY 33 v 3

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Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are
in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet; everyone
shall receive of Thy words

This book, written by Moses the man of God, is called Deuteronomy because it is a repetition, the second giving of the law. It had already been given and now, before he departs from them Moses is inspired by the Lord to repeat the law with explanations and enlargements, occupying the whole of this book. We need the Lord to repeat things to us. We need Him to impress lessons which He has taught us on our forgetful hearts, not a second time only, but often, and what a mercy it is that He condescends to do it. He does cause us to remember His ways toward us, and our ways toward Him. For the latter He gives us repentance and shame, for the former, gratitude, humble gratitude and love. You will never remember, in the light of the Spirit's grace, one single step of God toward you as a gracious God, and not see some beauty, not feel some mercy. By a cold effort of the memory, you may think of most of the circumstances of your lives, and get no benefit. You can think and think and think with your heart as hard as stone, but you cannot hear the Remembrancer, Jesus Christ, without having some sacred feeling, without having some feeling such as, if you gave it expression, would be like this "Is this the manner of man O Lord?" Why such love to me? Why such favour to me, to me who am less than the least of all saints, to me who am worse than all other saints, more unprofitable, untender, ungracious? May the Lord never leave off reminding us of what we were. "Thou shalt say my father was a Hittite and my mother an Amorite". "Look to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged, to the rock whence ye are hewn". And may He never leave off reminding us of His mercies to us.

This book of Deuteronomy has been called by some, a book of reprehension, because therein the Lord reprehends His people for

their forgetfulness of Him. They forgot the Rock of their salvation. And if the Lord were to speak to us, He would reprehend us often, yes He would reprehend us. We have forgotten the Trinity, the Covenant of grace, the blood of the everlasting Covenant, the visits of God, the impressions of truth, the sweetness of promises, the efficacy of rebukes. We have forgotten the tenderness of God to us in providence. We have forgotten Him. "Why sayest thou O Jacob and speakest O Israel, 'My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God'. Hast thou not heard, hath it not been told thee, that God, the everlasting God fainteth not neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding". Hast thou not been told this poor sinner? Hast thou not been told that there is an infinite supply of grace in the Lord Jesus? Then what reprehensible conduct this is in us, what reprehensible ways we have had and still have. May the Lord give us to understand this.

On the eve of his departure from them, Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel, and this chapter contains the blessings which he was inspired to utter, blessings which are better, as spiritually understood and received, than the whole world, and the text is a statement of what the Lord has done for His children, fixed on them His love. "Yea He loved the people". Though He came down to them in a fiery law, yet in that He did not deal with other nations the same way. No. What nation ever beside you, said Moses, heard the voice of God out of heaven, and lived as you do this day. When God speaks out of a fiery law to a sinner in this world to convince and convert him, that is coming to him in love, only the poor soul does not believe that. O no! he cannot believe that the word of threatening and of condemnation, the word of God's sovereign, holy claim on him, he cannot believe that that which brings only condemnation has any love in it. But love is the root of it, love is the infinite source of it. A saving, sound conviction, a law work, God does in love bring all His people to understand in some measure. "Yea He loved the people" with an everlasting love. Nothing caused it outside Himself. Nothing can stop and hinder and change it that a sinner, on whom it is fixed, can do. Without beginning, without ending, embracing the objects of it and securing them from the hell they deserve bringing them to know the greatest gift of it, even the gift of Jesus Christ. That is the greatest evidence and proof of the

love of God to a sinner, and the proof in that sinner's heart is the Spirit of Christ bringing Christ to him. But what puts the poor sinner to it so terribly is this, that, when the Lord will make a place for Christ, He does it by digging, burning, reproving, convincing him, bringing him into the dust of self abasement and nothingness. No child of God will go to heaven feeling that he has this little bit of goodness in his nature. All bad, and he must feel it, and when that comes to pass in a good measure, then Christ is brought by the Spirit, Christ is revealed, and this is love. Everlasting love designed this, everlasting love brings it to pass. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love".

He loved the people. He loved them collectively; He loved them individually and brings the truth of this to them individually by the Holy Ghost. Why, dear friends, you cannot be on a better search; you cannot make a better enquiry at the throne of grace, than this, to enquire whether God loves you, and you cannot wait for a greater thing than for the answer which He, in His own time, will surely give to you. "They that seek shall find". This is it that so stumbles us. We, by nature, think the Lord will care for people who care for Him, and love people who have something lovable in them. He teaches us that His love is fixed on loathsome people, abominable people, ignorant, blind; enemies, filled with enmity, darkness, confusion, distance, who deserve hell. His love is fixed on such people. Had it been as we, by nature, think it should be, which of us would have a hope of going to heaven? The greatest sinners, the most wicked people, God takes in hand and saves them. He loves sinners and, as I said, the proof, the greatest proof, is the gift of Christ. And the greatest proof you can have in your soul is the coming of Christ to you, and until Christ does come to you, in some measure, you have not that evidence that you want and long for that God has loved you with an everlasting love. You may have many tokens, and if you have had, bless God for them. You may have many touches, many sweet helps and I hope you do have such. I hope the Lord will speak to you by me and by the Scriptures and by the hymns, and in the services, but this is the thing, this is that that just puts the seal of God upon all His teaching in the soul, the revelation of Christ, and the Apostle tells us of the greatness of this matter when he says that this is the mystery which God hid from ages and from generations, but which now He

manifests unto His saints, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. O many people, it is to be feared, are well enough pleased and satisfied to see a picture of Christ, and if I could draw pictures, word pictures of Christ, and hold them up to you, how many of you would be satisfied, and how many of you would say, the picture is beautiful, but we want the Person, we want the Person. We want Christ in us the hope of glory. That is the thing. If a thousand discerning christian men should say to one of you here living under conviction, and having your hypocrisies and guile and malice and deceit and wickedness opened to your view, so that you loathe yourself and think that it is wonderful that God lets you live on the earth, think it is a wonder that he has found a situation for you when nobody respects you, when nobody cares for you, I say if a thousand discerning christians should say to you "Why we can see grace in you, we believe God loves you" that would not do you real good, that would not satisfy you. What you want, and God grant you may never rest, nor give Him rest, till you get it, is Christ in you the hope of glory. Now that will do it. Yea, He loves sinners. What a beautiful, lovely word that is that Paul speaks concerning himself. "Who" speaking of Christ, he says "Who loved me and gave Himself for me". I do not think my saying will cast any of you down who have not got this blessing. I do not intend it for that. I would rather, if it please God, it should be the means of whetting your appetite, stirring you up to seek this great thing, Jesus Christ revealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Then if He did that, I will tell you what you would do. You would open your little arms - Flavel calls them little arms - your little arms of faith and embrace this Saviour, welcome Him into your heart, and bless Him for coming, and weep over His wounds and His griefs and His death. You would embrace Him in your affections and the very throne of your heart you would find not good enough for Him, but yet you would ask Him to sit upon it, to be the King of glory in you. Yea, it is a great thing to be loved of God, and to have this proof of it, Christ coming. Christ smiles where He loves. He gives a smile where He loves. A smile is to the soul what the bright brilliance of the sun is to the earth. The brilliance of the sun puts out all other lights. Yes, and the brilliance of Christ's Person and grace and smile will put all creation out so to speak and fill you just with satisfaction, and you will thrive under that. Your soul will thrive under that. And I know just enough of that smile to say this about it to you, you will be

melted. You will melt, melt in grief, melt with love, rise in affection, praise this dear Lord Jesus.

In the next place it is dying love. Love brought the Son, the eternal Son of God to the womb of the virgin to assume into union with Himself that nature that was begotten by the Holy Ghost. Love made Him empty Himself and make Himself of no reputation. Dear friends, what a statement we have of this in the Philippians "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, but took on Him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man and humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross." This was what love did. That full love of Christ was a self-emptying love. He made Himself of no reputation, veiled His eternal glory, veiled all that that belongs to Him by nature, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, His eternal Godhead, only letting a few rays of it come forth by occasions to convince men and to show to His disciples that He is very God. Love took Him into the wilderness when the devil took Him there, the Spirit led Him there. Love brought Him to a willingness to be there forty days and nights with wild beasts, and the worst of all the wild beasts was the devil tempting Him, tempting the holy Lamb of God. Love brought Him to a willingness to submit to the vile presence of the devil and the temptations of that foul spirit, and love brought Him to be willing to be hungry and weary and to sit on the well to bless a poor, abandoned woman. And love made Him go out into the mountains to pray all night, carried Him into the garden of Gethsemane, there to be thrown on the ground, sweating as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. It took Him, with all infinite willingness, into the judgment hall, that He might suffer His judgment to be taken away in the day of His humiliation. Love did all this, and brought Him to the climax of love in its manifestation to be a poor sufferer, suffering the ignominy of a broken law, the ignominy of the curse of the law, the ignominy of sin. The wrath and shame that men heaped on Him ought not to be named by the side of this. Love did it all. Yea He loved the people well enough to die for them.

It is forgiving love; it is love that puts sin away from the conscience by the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel. Love that does not allow a single speck to be on

the conscience sometimes to trouble it, but purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It is patient love, love that has borne with us these years. No parent could ever bear with a rebellious child as Christ bears with His wayward people. Such is His love that nothing can turn Him from it nor from them, the objects of it. The love of Christ is expressed again and again in this way, by new visits, by fresh touches, by sweet inshining, by encouraging words, by taking up the soul and, as it were, carrying it. It is a patient love. He says, "You have forgotten your resting place". "My people have forgotten Me days without number". What then? Will He forget them? O no! He says "Return unto Me". Return to your cities, return to your resting place. So He manifests His love.

Dear friends, it is a communicating love. Everyone who has love for a person will seek an opportunity to express it, not in word only, but in deed. As it is written "Love not one another in word only, but in deed and in truth". Christ will never tell you to do what He wont do Himself. Does He communicate anything? O yes, we shall speak of this a little later. By the help of God in a few minutes we will take that up. This is a powerful love, a love that is so powerful as that the objects of it find Him coming never too late, never too late. Yes, He loved the people out of a deserved hell as it were into a freely given heaven. He loved them out of darkness and confusion into His marvellous light. He loved them out of their trials and troubles and turmoils into a sweet rest in Himself, till the soul says "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". Love is a covering love, love is a convoy, love is a support, love is the pavement in Solomon's chariot. Love surrounds the sinner, love is in the heart of all God's dealings. Love is in the rod when it is used, in the reproof, when it is spoken. Dear friends it is a religion of love that the Lord gives to His people. Yea, He loved the people. Blessed be God for this, His great mercy to us.

"All His saints are in Thy hand". This expresses the power and the support and the security of the Lord's people. He holds His people and sustains them with the right hand of His righteousness. This is the love that Christ shows to His people. He takes them up in His hand. If you have a cross, He will carry you and your cross. Rutherford speaks of Christ taking the heaviest end of the cross. I

would say that is true, but also sometimes it is as if He graciously carries all together. But chiefly it is to express the security. No man shall pluck them out of My hand. No man shall pluck them out of My Father's hand. That is their security. "All His saints are in Thy hand". If the saints are there, their circumstances are there, their trials are there. He weighs the path of the just. He weighs their troubles. Their circumstances are all there; their difficulties are there; their troubles, temptations, sorrows, griefs, burdens, all in the hands of Christ and they live to prove what is written. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose". When you fall into trouble, when you fall into temptation, into darkness, into sorrow; when you fall into a state of desertion, the Lord for the time leaving you, you will find that it was just with you as it was with the Psalmist who, in his fretfulness misunderstood God's works, but finds later on that he had been with the Lord continually and had been held up by His hand. "I am continually with Thee, Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand". All His saints, from the least of them to the greatest of them, from the strongest to the weakest, all in the hand of Christ. They are saints. A saint is a holy person. Well, some may be instantly stumbled at that. Some of you may say, that does cut off. No! I will maintain what I have said, and I will maintain that if you are under the Spirit's teaching you are not cut off by it. A holy person is a separated person; a separated person is one who is separated from his former ways, his former thoughts, his former companions, his former hopes, his former religion, if he had any, and you cannot say you are not separated from those things. Born and taught of God, a sinner is brought to deny and hate his own life. That is a saint. All are in the hands of Christ, the hands of the Trinity, the Father's hand, the Son's hand and the Spirit's hand and how safe they are who are thus held up.

"They sat down at Thy feet". This is a posture that expresses satisfaction, contentment, hope, expectation. It expresses satisfaction when the Lord blesses His children, graciously smiles on them and gives them a discovery of Himself such as He gave to the church as we have it in the Canticles. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste".

There is no gadding about then. We gad about enough when the Lord is away from us, but when that revelation of Christ is made and we admire and delight in Him we then sit down. It expresses sweet reconciliation, no quarrel with God; He is right. It is written of king David at a certain time that whatsoever he did pleased the people, and I can say this, and you will believe it who have experienced it, whatever God does to you when you are before Him and at His feet pleases you. Your losses, crosses, troubles, evils, everything He has done pleases you. Not a thing would you have altered, not a trouble would you have taken away, not a bitter you would have removed from your cup, not a burden, not a straw would you have taken off your shoulders. Everything that He does pleases you. Is not that true? Do not some of you, in your consciences and affections say, yes it is true. He has pleased me and His ways have pleased me. It expresses a sweet hope and expectation. "Sit still" said Naomi to Ruth "Sit still my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day", and you can now look forward to the fulfilment of all the promises given to you, all the tokens for good. All the intimations of mercy and love you can look forward to the fulfilment of them. And this is a wonderful sweet way of living. It brings a man of God to Christ's Word, into a conformity with Christ's Word "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof". You can leave everything, yes and sometimes you can look at the promises the Lord has made to you and say, I believe I shall see the fulfilment of them. There is an expectancy in this sitting down. It is not a hurry. No! you are not making haste, you are not rushing about, you are not saying, now if I do not do this at once it will be too late. But you are just quietly waiting on the Lord God, the God of your salvation, the God of hope. Why, you have got it already in your hand, the hand of faith, whatever He has promised you. It is a sweeter thing I judge to get a blessing in the hand of faith before you get it in reality, when you can say in faith, now I believe it is coming, and you sit down and wait for it. "All His saints are in Thy hand". He does wonders for His saints. Look at what He did for Israel whom He loved, kept them in Egypt, preserved them 430 years. At the expiration of the time, when they were to come out, He sent Moses to them, raised up Aaron the priest of the Lord, brought them out of Egypt by mighty signs and wonders and an outstretched arm. He did all these things;

stretched out His arm to deliver them and lead them through the wilderness, brought them into the land of promise, because He loved them. What has He done for you? Similarly He has wrought in a spiritual way, kept you in unregeneracy, preserved you in Egypt, brought you out of it, carried you through the Red Sea, has brought you on thus far in the wilderness. All this from love, as it is expressed by Jeremiah, "Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". "When Israel was a child I loved him and brought him out of Egypt". This is what the Lord has done. "They sat down at Thy feet". Mary did it; she made choice of that better part, that one thing needful. She sat at His feet, and He approved of it and confirmed her in the position and in that that she found to be needful.

"Every one shall receive of Thy words". These are the words of the gospel, gracious words, and there are three kinds of words which I shall name. First, the word of life. The word of life comes in the holy gospel. It is contained in the promises; it is contained in some things that the Lord speaks in the expression of holy doctrines which are made spirit and life. "The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life". Yes, whenever God opens one doctrine of grace to a sinner's understanding and seals it on his heart, he finds it to be a precious word. Yes, he finds it to be spirit, animating his spirit, and life gathering his heart up to God with feeling adoration, admiration, worship, confidence. Doctrine is like a mould. It is spoken of so in the Romans by the Holy Spirit. It is like a mould and the Lord delivers His people into it, runs their spirits into the truth of the doctrine and that gives the shape of the truth to their spirit and their understanding and very wonderful it is. We therefore prize doctrine. I hope the Lord does not let me preach dry doctrine. I know I preach doctrine but I do not want to preach it drily, and to preach it as a dry theory to you. It is moistened, it is animated, it is made a quickening doctrine when the Spirit comes. If I had gracious ability and time and strength to run through the doctrines which we hold and which I have tried briefly to preach among you for years, I might set before you things which you who are saints will want eternity to explore and enjoy. Take the doctrine of the Trinity, that pure, that priceless, that glorious doctrine of the God of all grace subsisting in three Persons. I think sometimes the older I get the more

wonderful, and I trust the more precious is the doctrine of the Trinity to my soul. Without the Trinity everything is wrong. Deny the Trinity, you deny everything, and deny the personalities in the Trinity in their saving and necessary relationships to each other, then you bring confusion. I can never describe what it has been to me to consider the Eternal Sonship of the second Person in the light of Scriptures such as that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". If you deny that Christ is the only begotten Son and that the personalities in the Trinity are those that are named, and that they are essential, then you bring confusion. If there are three Persons with no distinctive subsistence, no relationship and no distinctive names, then what a strange thing that the Holy Spirit should write that God should send His only begotten Son into the world. O but this is only one doctrine, though it is the first and the chiefest. All the others are related to this doctrine. Every doctrine of the gospel is related to the doctrine of the Trinity, for the doctrines of grace come from the Trinity and express the Persons of the Trinity, the love of the Trinity, the purposes of the Trinity, and the ending of those purposes. And when you receive of the words of God you receive doctrine. It is not indifferent; it does matter what you believe. You say, I am ignorant; pray the Lord to teach you. I am ignorant and I know I am, and sometimes I pray that prayer "That which I see not teach Thou me". But I will pass on to say this, we receive the words of promise. The Holy Ghost has spoken of the importance and blessed nature of the promises thus "All the promises of God in Christ are yea and amen to the glory of God by us". Now the whole of that is very beautiful, and do not separate, do not stop at this "All the promises of God in Him are yea and amen". Do not stop at that, I say. Why, what follows? "To the glory of God by us". What does that mean? Well, Joshua said to Israel - You know in your heart and in your soul that not one word hath failed - and now that was to the glory of God in Joshua and in the people. You may have had a promise, some gracious word let down to you by the Holy Ghost, and you have had some fulfilment of it. Perhaps you have waited for years, as Abraham waited for Isaac, but you waited and waited, cast it down and took it up again in the power of the Holy Spirit; sometimes said, it cannot be, then said it shall be; sometimes have felt as if you could enter into the experience of Jeremiah "O Lord Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived"; then you have seen the folly of it, of your own spirit

and your faith has again been strengthened by the Holy Ghost to take up the promise and take it to the Lord and say to Him "Remember Thy holy promise" and you have lived so far and so long in it that if you speak as God has taught you you will say in your measure - and up to this time not one thing has failed, not a word which you have received has fallen to the ground. You have received it. "Every one shall receive of Thy words", receive of Thy promises and when you have had one fulfilment of a promise, do not think you have got all of it. You have not had all of it. A promise may have many fulfilments. When I was young the Lord made a promise to me and He fulfilled it in a few minutes and then I forgot it for a long time till it came back. He reminded me of it, and since then I have seen it fulfilled again and again and again, and you will get the same and even more than I have done, some of you, and then we can say "Not one thing has failed". And if the Lord Jesus were to say to us - Since I sent that word to you, when I sent you into the wilderness to prove it, when I sent you to Babylon to be delivered, when I emptied you and weakened you, and tried you, and brought you on till now, have you lacked anything? what would you say? If He said "Lacked ye anything?" you would have to say "Nothing Lord". There is one more thing I will say about a promise, and it is this. It contains more than your faith has ever seen. I feel that about what the Lord has said to me. You will never reach the fulness of it. You will never empty a promise, never.

Then I was going to say, a word of direction. Every one shall receive of Thy words of direction. When you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left hand, you shall hear a voice behind you saying "This is the way walk ye in it". Now what way? When you get away from the atonement then you are not right. Blood tracks all the path. When you get away from that Scripture, in the spirit of it, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" then you are not in a right way. But as long as you are walking depending on the Lord, looking to His blood and righteousness, hanging on His faithfulness, seeking His mercy, asking Him to guide you with His eye, then you are walking in that way that the voice points out. "This is the way walk ye in it". Depend on Christ, depend on the Father, depend on the Holy Ghost, depend on what the Lord has said to you, and you shall not fail. A word of direction in providence He will give sometimes in your family, in your church, in the ministry,

in healing. O what directions we have. I have thought at times lately of that Scripture by Paul to Timothy "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". The Spirit indited all the direction that Paul gave to his son Timothy that he might, as a minister, know how to conduct himself. So with regard to all the Lord's people, things are written, directions are given, exhortations are spoken, all that we may know how to behave ourselves. And this is one solemn reflection I would make here, namely, the Lord has written exhortations and directions to His children, if I may so speak, on the ground of their poor fallen nature. He knows we are given to lying, and He says "Lie not one to another". He knows we are naturally given to busy bodying, and He says "Be not a busy body in other men's matters". He knows some are disposed to be idle, and He says "Now work with your own hands. If any man will not work he shall not eat". All these things are directions and when you receive one of them in power then you will find some good effect. "Every one shall receive of Thy words."

And lastly, when you receive a kind word from the Lord, when you receive any heavenly doctrine, you notice the effect, for this is what I would say to you. The things that are written are written for our admonition and John says "These things I write unto you that ye sin not". That is the effect; the natural tendency of these things is to prevent you, keep you, hold you up, keep you close to the Lord, bring you to your knees and keep you there. "Every one" every poor saint "shall receive of Thy words". May the Lord speak to us.

AMEN.