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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 7 November 1926

DEUTERONOMY 26 verses 17,18,19

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God,
and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes,
and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken
unto His voice: And the LORD hath avouched thee this day
to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that
thou shouldest keep all His commandments; and to make thee
high above all nations which He hath made, in praise,
and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy
people unto the LORD thy God, as He hath spoken

The first of these three solemn verses I spoke about this morning. The solemnity of a profession of religion, of the Name of God, of Jesus Christ, Almighty God, is very great and should never be taken up lightly. It is an amazing thing to be enabled to make a public profession of the Name of God by the grace of the Holy Ghost. None of us can be said to be worthy of having the Name of God named upon us. We are not worthy to think of Him, not worthy to entertain a thought of the divine Majesty. Do you believe that? Has it ever appeared to you a very solemn thing to have the Name of God upon your lips, to have Him named upon you in a way of public profession? By profession to say, I believe in God Almighty; to say I believe in the inspiration of the Bible; I believe in the fall of Adam; I believe in the utter ruin of every human being; I believe in the inability of man to do a good thing and I believe that that inability is part of his sin. Do you believe that it is a solemn thing to say I believe in Jesus Christ. Believe that the Son of God took into union with His divine Person that body which was prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary and that in the Man Christ Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; that that God-Man gave up His life on the cross, that He was buried, that He saw no corruption, that He was raised again the third day according to the Scripture; that after having shown Himself alive to His disciples by many infallible proofs He entered into heaven; passed into the heavens with His Own

blood, and that there He is on the throne administering grace, ruling in the world. Do you believe in the tremendous profession you make when you say I believe in the Holy Ghost, Almighty God, who quickens the dead, condemns the sinner under the law, reveals in Him Jesus Christ, purges his conscience from dead works by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ; that by His operations sinners are led on in the way of everlasting life. Dear friends, as many of you as have made this confession of the Trinity and of our holy faith, so many have avouched the LORD their God, to be their God. "Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God". A more solemn word can never be uttered by our lips; God grant His approbation of that avouchment.

I must not occupy your time by, even in the briefest possible way, going through what I said this morning, but come at once, by His mercy, to the 18 verse. "And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all His commandments". It is very great for a sinner, as I have said, to make a profession of God, but O, that God should avouch a sinner, and a sinful people, to be His; that He should come to a sinner and say, thou art Mine, My beloved, and come to a church and say, My beloved is one; "Many daughters have done virtuously but, thou excellest them all" (Proverbs 31 v 29); that He should come to a church and knock at her door and say, Open to Me, My sister, My spouse; this is passing all knowledge. It must be felt to be known; the beauty, the condescension, the love, the efficacy, the power, of this avouching of Christ, of God, must be felt even to be believed. He did not need us my friends; He is God blessed for evermore in Himself. "Blessed art Thou O Lord". He did not need us except insofar as He needed us by His own decree to have us. If then He did not need us, was it not an infinite act of love condescending to say this sinner and that sinner shall be Mine and I will be theirs? And if such matchless grace has come to us, do not we owe to Him everything? If it is true of us, "Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price", may He cause us to believe and feel what follows - "Therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits which are His". This avouching, owning of a people, I would look at in this way. First, and including all the rest, He avouches a people or a person to be His when He grants His presence. "What nation", asks Moses in this Book earlier, "is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them" for all

that we call upon Him for. (Chapter 4 v 7). And when Israel's sin had provoked God, as it is recorded in Exodus - when they had made a golden calf and sat down to eat and drink and then rose up to play - so that God said to Moses, I will destroy them and make of thee a great nation, and Moses interceded, this was what it came to "If Thy presence go not with me carry us not up hence". "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". This is the owning, the avouching, by God Himself and may the Lord give it to us. The presence of God is known wherever it is; His presence in Christ. I will come to you, He said; I will manifest Myself to you. "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him and we will come unto him". O, if Christ comes to us, the house is holy, the soul is holy, the conscience is purified, the sinner is deeply humbled. His whole affection will then be set on Him who has come to be his Guest and also his Host. This presence is known in these following particulars. First in His Word: "I have given unto them the words Thou gavest Me", and the effect was this, "and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me". (John 17 v 8) The power, life, efficacy, sweetness and glory of the Word of God must be known in some measure by every child of God, not merely reading the Bible, but feeling the power of it. Some passages, Psalms, chapters read here and there will find their way, in the light and life of the Spirit's grace, into the soul and conscience. There will then be an animation, a moving of faith, an instruction, a real heavenly instruction. There will be the obedience of faith to it, a realisation that it is the living word of the living God. It has authority, it produces what it commands, it brings a glory with which the saints are to be covered. The Word of God, in its efficacious operation by the Spirit, is known to every saint in some measure sooner or later in his or her experience. We can never sufficiently value God's Word, but what He speaks to us, that is ours. The Book, the whole of it, is ours, but when we put our foot of faith on the rock of any Scripture, or when God opens, explains and applies any doctrine, any truth, to us by His Spirit, that is our portion: Every place that the sole of thy foot shall tread upon I give thee; that belongs to thee. Dear friends, this is one way in which the

avouching presence of God is known. He speaks His Word, He gives it. And you will know if He gives you any truth because it will sanctify you as Christ prays. Having given His disciples His Word, He says "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine". "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me". "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth". Now if you have some care that corrodes your mind, burdens your spirit, distracts your thoughts and turns you to yourself, or to the world, tempts you, if God gives you a word, directs you to a Scripture that touches the case, and you have faith to receive that, you will find there is an efficacy in it; it will sanctify you; which means, in that case, it will gather your faith up to God and enable you to cast your burden on Him and "Be careful for nothing but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God". Look for this. If God owns you in your own souls, if He owns us as a people, a church and godly in the congregation, this will be one way in which we shall know it and enjoy the mercy, namely by having His word given to us. It will be well for us to examine ourselves on this point.

The second way in which He is known, and by which He avouches His people to be His, is this, namely the unction of the Holy One. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things". Here you will find what is called the light of life, a light in your heart which brings life to you, moves, directs, supports, teaches, comforts; teaches you all things. All concerning God that you are to know; all concerning yourself that is profitable for your humbling and useful in that particular, that is useful to guide you to the Lord Jesus. This unction so softens and humbles and sanctifies the soul as that the world departs, hardness of heart, harsh judgments of God and of His ways in providence, depart. When you are under this unction it is a real owning or avouching of you by God Himself to be His. And O, the mercy of this; think of it; the Holy Ghost coming, the Spirit of promise given in the Covenant to the Lord Jesus and given by the Lord Jesus when He ascended into heaven; given by Him to His church. That blessing continues and will to the end of time, although today the measure of it appears to be very small. If we examine ourselves on this point, I expect, as God makes us discerning and sincere, most of us will confess that we have very little of this unction, and I

judge that every sent minister will confess that he feels very little of this unction, and that makes preaching so difficult today. So few, comparatively, have a case. Now this then is a thing for us to notice; have we this unction? Does the Spirit help our infirmities? Does He teach us how to pray? write petitions on our hearts? Does He lead us to Christ? Does He reveal Christ in us? Does He convince us more and more deeply of our sins? Does He show us how that Satan was judged when Christ said "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven". "Now is the prince of this world judged". Does He show us that He, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, hath prevailed to overcome, to open the Book and loose the seals thereof? That that blessed Jesus Christ who was on the cross crucified now rules in heaven and in earth and in hell. All providences are in His hand; all tangled skeins of difficulties in life are in His wise hand. His fingers can unravel them. Witty inventions which are needed by His poor people He has wisdom to find out. And the Spirit shows Him in these particulars to the people who are avouched to belong to the Lord. Blessed people - "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord" Happy is the nation that is in such a case as this to have the Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty God incarnate with them, giving them His Holy Spirit, for that is the unction of the Holy One, the Holy Spirit, teaching all things to those to whom He is given. Here you will get your infirmities helped; here you will get your hardness of heart melted away; here you will understand things by the Spirit that you can never otherwise enter into. Whatever we may lack as a church God grant we may not lack this unction. You will never go right if you lack this. You will never have any rule over your spirits if you lack this. You will never walk in humble obedience if you lack this. Nature is not sufficient for the gospel; nature can never enter into it, never enter into the kingdom of God, for corruption cannot inherit incorruption.

In the third place the Lord avouches His people to be His peculiar people in His ordinances and it becomes me to name this at this time. It has pleased God to maintain our lot as a little church. We suffer losses; I believe this year we have lost eight of the church and congregation by death. During my time with you I have buried, I might say in a manner, buried a chapel full of people. And every member of the church except a few who have left the town, I have buried all but one who happily is with us this evening. And it

has been a merciful dealing of God with us recently that two have been brought and recently been baptised and there were some of us who, that evening, felt the Lord's presence and was not that an avouching of us? If He comes into an Ordinance, if He gives the soul to feel His presence in it, if He comes into the Ordinance of baptism, think of it. There are four persons in that Ordinance then. The Father owning the Son, the Son submitting to it, the Holy Spirit in His unction and the subject, the obedient subject. Baptism. It is a very solemn ordinance with a divine significance setting forth the burial of Jesus Christ, the waves and billows of God rolling over Him, and His rising again. Now the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper; He has given it; He instituted it. And think of it for a moment in the light of our text. "And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people". Go in mind if you can to that Supper where Jesus and His disciples were; that Supper which He honoured so. And when they had ended the Supper He instituted another Supper. He took the bread and He blessed it, He break it, He gave it to His disciples and said "Take eat this is My body which is broken for you". He took the cup and blessed it and said "Drink ye all of it"; all of you drink it, for "this cup is the new testament in My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Now beloved friends and fellow members what an avouching may we say that was. The Lord of life and glory in that room with those dear disciples of His giving them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, saying, as it were, I avouch thee this day to be my peculiar people. I call you Mine; I avouch you to be My own people. From that day to this the ordinance has been observed and is to be observed to the end of time. We are to observe it this evening - high privilege - and our dear friends - three of them, for one had been baptised - are to be received. They have avouched the LORD to be their God. They avouched Him to be their God when they came before the witnesses, that is the church here. They told of their trouble and of His mercy to them and they are, this evening, in this public manner to avouch Him to be their God and He, I trust, will again, as He has done already, avouch them in their consciences to be His people, a peculiar people. Now this invests the ordinance with a singular blessedness. May we know it. He is in it. "Lo I am with you alway". "This do in remembrance of Me", take this bread representing My broken body; take and eat it. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". Take this cup, each

one of you, and drink it for "this cup is the new testament in My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins". Except ye drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you. May God in His mercy help us in this. This then is what I would say about the avouching by God of a people to be His peculiar people. Peculiar people, not by natural disposition; this is not to be at all understood. It does distinguish one person from another but what is meant here is a people differing from all the people of the world. Differing, not naturally, but in the Spirit. Having a religion that nobody else has, a faith peculiar to them, called the faith of God's elect, the faith of God's operation. Precious faith, peculiar in that they believe in that God in a manner peculiar to themselves. To you, said the Lord, it is given; to you, My people it is given to know these things. I speak to the world in parables; I speak to you plainly. I say to you plainly that I came forth from the Father and I return to Him. I tell you plainly that I lay down My life for the sheep; I am the Good Shepherd. He speaks these things and this peculiar faith receives them. Yea, it is a wonderful faith that says in a sinner's heart, your sins are black, they are innumerable, they are terrible, they have an infiniteness in them as being done against an infinite God, but "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth you from all sin" Peculiar faith that, is it not? Have we got it? Peculiar is their hope; it does not depend on circumstances; it does not rise with prosperity in circumstances; it does not perish with adversity in circumstances. It is a living hope in a living God; the hope of Israel that shall not perish until it shall sweetly die in a happy, endless fruition. This blessed hope has bouyed up some of our souls in trouble, has said in our hearts: "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and My God". A peculiar people in their love. They are the objects of a love matchless, if unimagivable, inconceivable in the eternity, in the vastness, in the stedfastness, in the greatness, in the sacrifice, in the sweetness of it, and their love is a love that goes out to Him who loved them. "We love Him because He first loved us". And the difference between His love and their love is this that He eternally loved the most ungodly people, the most loveless creatures, the most guilty and wicked of all people and their love is fixed on the fairest of all, fairer than the children of men. What a difference. Peculiar in their adhesion, their adherence to the doctrine of God's Word.

You will never let it go if you have got a right hold of it, a hold by faith and if it has got hold of you in the power and efficacy of it by the Holy Ghost. And so from great reasons these people are peculiar. Peculiar in their worship, in their worship. This is their worship; "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" and this will take you to your rooms, this will take you into a secret place, and there you will worship. You will worship when you have not the aid of your own voice or the voice of a friend for the human voice seems to be an aid in this way as a kind of concentration when the voice is heard. But when there is no voice; O, when the spirit and God are together and there is a brokenness, an awe, a reverence, a living faith moving, a confession of sin, a seeking of mercy, an admiration of the Deity of the Lord Jesus; an admiration of His blessed life, His vicarious death, His wondrous birth, His not seeing corruption, His rising again, His ascension into heaven, His pleading there. All this belongs to a child of God. Some may say, we do not understand all that. You may understand more than you know you understand. I believe it is so with many of the Lord's people today. They know more than they know they know; more than they can believe. When they say "God be merciful to me a sinner"; when they mourn their hard heart, when they confess their wickedness, when they think often can it be that God can look on such a wretch, can it be that Jesus Christ can bless such a sinner, and they justify Him in anything He may do with them and to them, they honour Him and they admire Him as some of you must own you admire His death and His precious blood and say, O if I only knew that He shed that blood for me. A peculiar people. Peculiar in their principles of conduct. A worldly man does that which is right perhaps. If you got to the root of it he would say it is the best policy. A good man does what is right, and he says, I would fain please God. I would do what He bids me. I would walk the way He would have me walk. A difference in the motive, such a difference as makes the persons influenced by the difference acceptable or not to God. "As He hath promised thee". Promised the people. Why, He promised them in eternity. How could He when they did not exist. They existed in the purpose of God; they existed in the Lord Jesus set up from eternity to be their Head and Surety, and life, and God promised them in Him. Why, the promise is in Isaiah: "As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon Thee, and my words which

I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." Yea, and sometimes He still promises people. Did you ever covet that word that was spoken to Daniel. "O man greatly beloved" As the marginal reading is "a man of desires". God desires a poor sinner, desires His society. Come with Me, He says to him. Come with Me, My sister, come with Me. "Let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages". He desires the society of a sinner and of a church. "Open to Me, My sister, My spouse". A peculiar people, a people of promise, a people to whom God makes promises.

"And that thou shouldest keep all His commandments". Many of them; ordinances two; three, you may say, with regard to the ministry. "Love one another" This is a new commandment which I give unto you that ye love one another. Keep from the world; save yourselves from this untoward generation. Adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, and so on. And these are not little things, nor are they to be despised or turned away from.

"And to make thee high above all nations which He hath made". Here are a few poor people unknown to the world, unknown to great men - "Among the great unfit to shine" - and how can they be made high above all nations? This is the answer: "He taketh the poor out of the dust; He lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even the princes of His people, and make them inherit the throne of glory". You wont be higher than that in heaven. Set in heavenly places in Christ; predestinated to be in Him, to the adoption of children to God by Jesus Christ. A world of servants and a church of children. A world full of scaffolding to be taken down when the building is completed. A world of men, worldly men lying in wickedness, and a church preserved. This is being made high. No praise, no praise is given to the world such as is given to the church. "My beloved", "My sister", "My spouse"; "There is no spot in thee". Can you be higher than that? And no name - sons and daughters and closer, the Lamb's wife; the Bride, the Lamb's wife - no name for a creature higher than that. No other name so high as that. And no honour - This honour have all His sons. What is that? A people near unto Me; a people near unto Me. Bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh

and members of His body in particular.

"An holy people unto the LORD thy God, as He hath spoken". Here now I must leave it. God speak to us by it and fulfil this marvel in us. "The LORD hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people".

AMEN.