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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 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 covenant which God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a national covenant. It restricted the worship of God to the chosen people, the promises of God to that people, the presence of God in the midst of that people. But yet in it there was, what the Jews long opposed, could not bear that there should be, another nation brought in. There was in the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the seed which the Lord has blessed for ever, that seed that the Apostle Paul speaks of when he says to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ", for to Abraham He said Isaac should be his seed and in him should all nations of the earth be blessed. The national covenant made a national church and this national covenant and church we have as a type of the spiritual church, and the blessings of the national covenant were typical of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant and of the spiritual church of the Most High God. This word, primarily belonging to Israel, may be spoken to Israel after the Spirit and a very solemn word it is; very full of mercy to those to whom it is mercy. Full of blessing to those about whom the Lord in one place speaks, the people which had not obtained mercy should obtain mercy; the people who were not called the people of God should be called the people of God. It is

a great thing to be inside this first verse. "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." This belongs, so far as our feeble position is concerned, to us as a people. "This day" means this time, the time when God spake a second time the law to His people and now they were on the eve of entering into the Land of Promise. This time then belongs to the people of God after the Spirit who do in the merciful working of the Holy Ghost in them avouch Him to be their God. Some may be afraid of saying this, may be afraid of any minister applying it to them. They may object that there is no clear work in them; they may say, truly, that they have not been brought into liberty, have never received a revelation of Christ, doubt their interest and greatly fear missing that prize such numbers never seek, such numbers seek in vain. But, notwithstanding, I shall endeavour to hold this fast and lay it before you as God may help me. This day thou hast avouched the LORD to be thy God; hast declared, said, proclaimed to some person or persons as in God's sight, that thou knewest something about Him and by that knowledge art separated unto Him. One might go back to the day when Israel stood before the Lord and before that mountain which they might not touch, near to which they might not go lest God should break out upon them and destroy them, and they heard His voice, and Moses asks this question of them later: "Did ever people hear the voice of God as ye have heard and live as ye do this day?" Now it is very solemn to hear God's voice. We cannot, we do not expect to, hear it in the manner in which Israel heard it on that great day when they were assembled before that mountain and God spake to them, but we have heard it, or must hear it, in some manner and some measure so as to say with the people of old: Speak not Thou with us immediately; speak by a Mediator. Let not God speak to us immediately lest we die. And this brings a sinful person to be on the side of God at once. You have avouched Him to be a just God, have avouched Him to lay a just claim on you, a claim you cannot meet, cannot honour, and have avouched that that holy God whom you in a measure and manner know to be what His Word declares Him to be, just, you have avouched Him and though you may not say He is your God yet you are so on His side by that voice that you have heard, so on the side of His nature, His truth as manifested, as that you could not bear perhaps the thought of being against Him or being united to that company that is against Him. It is a great

thing to kneel down before Almighty God and know that He is just, that He is great; a very solemn exercise of mind this is. Very bonding it is; a spirit of bondage given again to fear; but it is very wholesome. You may know more of the law than you think you know in those exercises of your mind wherein and whereby you stand trembling before the divine Majesty, fearing lest He should cut you off as you know you deserve to be cut off; confessing His justice and seeing, in the light of His justice, your own injustice, your own unjust condition. Never - God keep us from it - never may we turn against Him and avouch that He is unjust. Men do who are dead in sin; saints cannot do that as they are alive by grace, and under the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Now as a congregation, 'tis great for us to make this statement, to avouch ourselves to be on the side of a holy God, to realise that in our own name we may not approach Him; that our nature is utterly depraved; that our weakness, our inability to serve Him is our sin. To avouch solemnly that He would be just to cut us off, not only for our actual transgressions, but for our inability to obey Him and to love Him. Look, as God helps you, at His character. The character of God known by a sinner gives sobriety to that sinner, weight to God's Word, reality to His nature, to His Being as He has revealed Himself. Beware of a flippant religion; such a religion comes where there is no true knowledge of God; such a religion leads many many people to, as it seems, the gate of heaven to them, but it is the wide gate and broad way that leads to destruction. Nothing kills natural religion so much as a sight of God. Nothing withers human strength so much as a sight of God. Therefore when you feel solemnly impressed with a sense of the awful majesty of God it will bring you to this announcement, this avouching, that He is holy. Isaiah came to it; he said - "Woe is me". "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lipsfor mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." It is a great thing to be convinced of your unclean lips by the sight of a holy God. Stand there, remain there, sinner till something else comes to you from that same God. Ye have this day avouched God to be thy God in respect of the Mediator. I was struck with what you were singing in the first hymn and it rather helped me to hope that this subject on my mind was laid there by the Lord, for you sang

Thee we own a perfect Saviour

Avouched and owning mean the same thing. Do you own the Saviour? The Saviour is Jesus Christ the Friend of sinners. The Saviour is Jesus Christ who came to save the lost; to call the sick and heal them; to bring the distant near; to forgive sins, to purge guilt, to remove pollution as to its dominion. Jesus Christ is the Saviour as the Mediator between God and men; and that great God to whom a sinner, rightly apprehending Him, dare not think of going; that Mediator says to such a sinner approach God through Me. Now dear friends, have we not avouched Jesus Christ to be God?

That Christ is God I can avouch

says one, and we have said the same words many and many a time. A Mediator, One in whom God is; One through whom God is approachable and is approached. One who has undertaken an evil case; an Advocate to bring a guilty person honourably through his trial. A Mediator in whom the rays of the Godhead are and they are, as coming from Him, bearable by an enlightened sinner. Bearable. O the attraction of this Person Jesus Christ. Very repellent divine justice may be as it beams in its nakedness into a guilty conscience. When the same divine nature is viewed by faith - seen by faith in the condescension of Christ's incarnation - it becomes very very attractive. Did you ever feel that you could not keep away from this? Now let us see how some in the Scripture avouched the Lord Jesus to be theirs. You take the case of Peter and His disciples when many were offended at the teaching of the Lord Jesus. He said to these few: "Will ye also go away?" Now Peter was enabled to make that statement to avouch the Lord Jesus. He said: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life". Now if all about you should become offended with the Lord Jesus - and many will be who now speak of Him as if they knew Him - and He were to appeal to you: "Will you go away?" what would you say? What do you think, what do you hope, what do you pray that you might say in such a case? Is it this? "To whom shall we go?" We have no hope but in Thy Person; no hope of forgiveness but by Thy blood; of justification but in Thy righteousness. No hope of having union with, communion with, God but in Thy Person. To whom shall we go for supplies of grace? To whom shall we go for strength in our weakness, to keep us from falling? To whom shall we go for supplies of mercy and peace of conscience and contrition of heart and sweet repentance? To

whom shall we go? Now faith says, this day I avouch that I have no hope in any person but the Lord Jesus; no hope for pardon but in His blood. This day. It is great to make this wonderful statement, to say it. I avouch, I believe in, and I say it, I believe in Jesus Christ. Take the Apostle Paul; he said: "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that great day". It is a mercy to be brought to such a point as that. "I know in whom I have believed". I have seen Him the Man Christ Jesus. I believe Him to be Almighty God. To say this, I believe Him to be the Friend of sinners and as such I go to Him. Sometimes I fear, a sinner may say, He will have nothing to do with me. Sometimes I think He will spurn me from His footstool. Sometimes the Word of God seems to bend itself against me and I greatly fear I shall be found on the wrong side. But, notwithstanding all my fears, this, this I believe, that if I only have faith to commit my lost soul to Him, to go to Him with all my nakedness and depravity, and go with all the guilt of my fall and of my transgressions; if I can only go like that to Him according to His Word He will not, He cannot, cast me out. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". Paul said: "I know in whom I have believed". It is no wild fancy that I have trusted in. I do not depend on One of whom I am in total ignorance. I know Him. My dear friends, to know Jesus Christ is eternal life. Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be the God of hope, the only hope, the only true object of hope, the only ground of hope, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Take Peter in the chapter I read. He says to the dispersion, you are living stones and there is a living stone laid in Zion for a foundation. "To whom coming ye also" - the dispersed to whom he was inspired to write being an Apostle of the circumcision - "To whom coming" - to Jesus Christ. Now some of you who may not be able to say with Paul in all that holy confidence: "I know in whom I have believed", may not be able to deny that you are coming, daily coming, coming with fears, coming in fear; coming with want, many wants; coming with weakness, with guilt, with pollution, with temptation's power, unable to overcome it yourself. "To whom coming" - with these things, these necessities - ye also are built up in Him, built on Him. Is that true? Take Asaph a poor, foolish man; as a beast he felt himself to be before the Lord for his rebellion and questioning God's merciful dealings. He said, when dealt with kindly by the Lord: "Whom

have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". He was a sinner, my friends; he had stumbled; he had been offended with God's dealings; and now the Lord, not dealing with him as he had dealt with God, the Lord, full of mercy and compassion, turns to him and, as it were, takes him by the hand and brings him out of that darkness and confusion and fretfulness and leads him into the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary spiritually is Christ. Asaph was led there and there he got instruction; O what instruction. There he saw and felt himself to be as a beast before the Lord, and there he saw his portion, His God and Saviour, and said "Whom have I in heaven but Thee". The spirits of just men made perfect are there, elect angels are there, but they are not objects of worship. No, but only One: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee". That made heaven desirable to him and if ever you get, if ever I get, a sight of Christ as being our own, we shall be glad to go there to be with Him. "And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" or, in comparison of Thee; better than all beside is Christ; more precious than fine gold, than the golden wedge of Ophir. These characters set forth before us the avouching of God. "Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God". What a mercy it is if you come to a point; do not be too anxious to get ever so many things; if you get one point settled at a time that is wonderful. Is this the point: "To whom shall we go?" Is this the point? There is none beside Him, no foundation but Jesus Christ. If this be well settled in your hearts, you will find it good. Do you avouch Jesus Christ as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily?; as possessing all the grace you need, all the merit you can need, all the justification you can need, all the access to God you can ever have, all the enjoyment of God that is possible to a creature? Look at the question - Is Jesus Christ this? Is it true to you, to me? "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Is there any grace you can require or pray for that He has not? Is there any supply that you can possibly have, of your soul, that does not come from Him? Everything is in Him; every blessing, great and small He has. Well now, could this congregation - how many in it could - rise, as it were, in heart and spirit, and look, humbly look, to God in heaven and say

Thou O Christ art all I want
All in all in Thee I find

O, what a statement to make; what a profession to make. "Hold fast the profession of your faith" says Paul "without wavering". Hold this fast. Have you avouched Jesus Christ to be all that? Think of what you have said; think of when you come into need; there will be this supply. When you are weak and ready to slip with your feet, there is this strength of God. And when you are ignorant and know not which way to turn; the wisdom of God. When you are tempted and ready to give way to the tempter, there is the blessed One who has said "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". And when you are devoured by sin as to all your efforts, here is One who has said "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace." A full Christ for empty people, a living Head for a living Church, to revive, to vivify and fructify and strengthen and bring honourably through - a living Christ. Dear friends, a living Christ of whom this Bible is full. He is made known by His good Spirit. What a great thing to say to Him, with some measure of knowledge, I avouch Thee this day to be the only Saviour of my soul, the only Rock on which I would build, the only strength by which, and in which, I would stand, the only wisdom by which I would walk. This, as felt; this, as believed, will bring in our souls a true cleaving to Him so as that we can say: "Entreat me not to leave Thee, nor to return from following after Thee". Then thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, as thy only joy and rejoicing. The more we know of sinful self the less can we have any confidence in self, and the less shall we feel there is any reason to rejoice in self. And when it pleases the Spirit to bring a little heavenly joy, then it will be a fulfilling of Christ's Word in a measure: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full". 'Tis a matter of rejoicing if you have a Saviour, if you have a Mediator, if you have a foundation, full of goodness to go to; if you have a good God to stand at your right hand; if you have a Saviour to help you in your difficulties and to pity when there is none to help you. It is a matter of rejoicing if you look to heaven and find that you have got a Friend there who will never leave you and never forsake you. Avouch then, my friends, this great God as the only joy of your soul, the only rejoicing of your hearts.

And in the next place thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be

thy God as to the ultimate end of all. The ultimate end means the last thing, the last of all. "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last". And what does this mean to the church of God? What does it mean to every saint here? It means this : "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" What an end! What an end has a man of the world whose one aim is to acquire wealth? When he has amassed what he has set out to do, he is then a poor man, but he has got his end in a measure. How different when a child of God, having struggled, laboured, prayed, received, and got along the way with difficulty, and again and again has been helped, has come to this - Now the hour is come when heart and flesh shall fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. O, if we are only brought to that, for a sinner to find that Jesus Christ is His Friend, His God, and the ultimate end of all; that there he is to be with the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost throughout eternity. "Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways". This is sure to follow; if you know God, you will want, desire and pant from time to time, to walk in His ways. What are His ways? the opposite of the world's ways. A believing way is the way of God. In the first place "Believe in the Lord and you shall prosper". God does give this honour to faith; He gives power to faith to look to Him and wait on Him and cleave to Him, and when it is so, then He is pleased to say "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". You will never believe anything in God by the power of the Spirit and not find God honour that believing. Sooner or later it is sure to come. As your faith is, so will God's testimony be. The woman could not leave Him, could not leave off arguing and pleading. Then He said to her: "Be it unto thee". "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee" If you can cleave to His throne, wait for His forgiveness, look to Him for grace, and for justification, He will honour your faith. "Believe in the Lord", said the prophet to Jehoshaphat, "and you shall prosper". And as sure as ever you find in your soul that cleaving to Christ, you will find prosperity come sooner or later. As you honour Him that way, so He will honour you. "Ye are they that have continued with Me in my temptation. I appoint unto you a kingdom" not of merit, but of mercy. In this manner, in this way, you have continued with Me; now I will bless you. If you have got faith God has given it to you and if you move that way it is in His power and He will honour it. I repeat it, He will honour your

faith. And these people said, we will walk in His ways. It is a type my friends. "Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God and to walk in His ways". By faith to walk in the way of prayer. "Pray without ceasing" This is God's way. He has appointed it. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Those of you who have the spirit of prayer poured out upon you at times know what a sweetness there is in taking your wants and your weaknesses and your fears and your desires to the Lord. The anointing of the Spirit is given and then the soul moves under that anointing to the throne of God's heavenly grace and pours out itself before Him. "Lord help me" brings help from heaven. Supply me, brings help and a supply from a full Christ. Guide me, and He says "I will guide thee with Mine eye". Have not you made this sweet statement, this avouchment, that we walk by the help of God away from the world and toward heaven?; away from self toward Christ? away from self-strength and self-wisdom and look to Him for everything. The way of prayer is a great way. "Call upon Me" says the Lord "in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me". "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it".

One of God's ways is the way of divine doctrine. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain and My speech shall distil as the dew". Doctrine; Luther said of it "Doctrine is heaven" and so it is. It contains what will bring you to heaven if the Holy Spirit reveals it in your heart. Doctrine is the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of the Spirit, of His unction, His teaching, His indwelling, His revealing Christ; the doctrine of God. I hope that you will not be a congregation destitute of doctrine. Meditate on these things, Paul said to Timothy and I say to you meditate on doctrine. As you know doctrine in the Spirit's grace you will be steady; it will be a girdle wherewith to gird up your loins; it will be a light in your understanding; it will make you a discerning people between things that differ. Good doctrine begets good experience in the Spirit's grace. Good doctrine makes a person sober-minded. Yea, the doctrines of God revealed will make Him precious to you. In my old age I find an attraction in doctrine; I find that it is a solid ground to stand on. Wait on God for teaching in this particular; walk in His ways. There is the Trinity and this

Holy, Holy, Holy God - each Person - speaks. The Father - I will walk in you; I will be to you a Father and you shall be to Me sons and daughters. The Son says to His poor people "Abide in Me and I in you", and the Holy Spirit is said to dwell in the saints. He shall be in you, said Christ, promising Him, He shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and you shall know Him. You may miss many things - God grant you may not miss the knowledge of the Trinity in experience. I am not speaking of knowledge floating in the brain - that makes a person very giddy and high-minded - but knowledge of doctrine, doctrine spoken home to your souls whereby you will be humbled, brought into the dust, lifted up to the throne, whereby you will be made truly little in yourself and truly great in Christ. Walk this way. Never think doctrine to be indifferent. Never think it to be a matter of no concern whether you know it or not. It is a great concern to know doctrine. God teach it us and make us live it, feeling the power of it and the sweetness of it and the strength of it in our souls.

Walk in this way - keep His statutes. His statutes are His Word, His revelation, His limitations to His people. Whenever a statute comes to you it will define your path, it will be a limitation to you. You may not go this way; you may not go that way, but keep inside the statute. Did you ever feel you would walk in God's statutes, holy gospel statutes. Promises which say do not go anywhere for supplies but to God. Promises that engage Him to you and bind you to Him. Walk in those statutes. Bless God for promises which are in Christ yea and in Him amen to the glory of God by all in whom they are fulfilled. Statutes, precepts. Precepts - a written word, a direction, an instruction, a forbidding, an exhortation; walk this way, avoid that way. Avoid the wrong way, pass not by it even. A precept tells you what to do. But I cannot, says one. If God has given a word it is to be regarded, and when He speaks it to a sinner, that sinner cries Lord give me power to walk in it. And one sings, and we sing sometimes

Give power and will and then command
And we will follow Thee
And when we're frightened bid us stand
And Thy salvation see

Did you ever feel as if you could say to the Lord: "My heart is fixed". Here I would fain walk as Thou hast directed. I would not walk aside nor turn aside from the path of Thy companions. We will walk in Thy statutes. "And His commandments". There are two commandments given to the church of Christ which abide and will abide as long as there is a church on earth. The first is this; it is in the commission given to the disciples just as Christ was ascending into heaven. Go, said He to His disciples, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. In Matthew the commission is thus given: Go into all, and disciple all, nations, teaching them to do whatsoever I command you, baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. That is the commission; here is the commandment: "This do in remembrance of Me". "This do" not because it pleases you, not because others have done it, not because you feel it is simply a rite, but because He has commanded it, and because of the beautiful significance of it as opened by the Holy Spirit. And the other commandment is the Lord's Supper. "This do in remembrance of Me". Here is My body, take it; here is My blood, drink it. "This do in remembrance of Me". And this day, this day, at this time, we avouch this great God to be our God and to walk in His statutes and His ways and to keep His holy commandments. "And His judgments". His blessed Word in its decisions. His Word settles things, my friends. There is no appeal from this Book; the last appeal - what God judges to be right is right; what He says is wrong is wrong; no matter how we may view the matter as fallen men, His judgments are right. O my friends, it is great to be able to say with the Psalmist "Concerning Thy precepts I know them to be right". The Word of God is a perfect Word. To walk in these things is to hearken unto His voice. The voice of God is in several ways or matters. It is in creation; the invisible things of God are revealed in creation, even His eternal power and Godhead. And if you can look on creation and not hear that voice saying, the Eternal God made us this and that; if you can look on creation and not read the great power that called out of nothing into being what you look on, then you are wilfully blind and wilfully deaf; you are not innocent. The voice of God is in providence. Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it? Listen what providence says; it will talk to you

sometimes. The voice of God is in the Bible, this blessed Book, given by inspiration of God, and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Some may say, we agree with all that. The voice of God, in the fourth place, is in the soul. When the Lord gives the hearing ear and the wise and understanding heart, many a Scripture will speak then. Yes, many a Scripture. Some Scriptures will condemn you for your shortcomings; they will tell you that you have not lived as you ought to have lived; that you have not been in your family what you should have been; you have not been in your business as diligent as you ought to have been; acted with a fervency of spirit. They will tell you in your conscience that you have been wrong; wrong in your spirit, wrong in your desires, wrong in your aims. O, what condemnation may come, and will come, from the voice of God and you will hearken to it. You could probably despise a friend if he came and faintly pointed out some things which your conscience would tell you were true, but if God comes and points out those things, as to their root, origin, and motive, you would say, I am guilty Lord. But His voice is likewise heard in the gospel, the gospel of forgiveness, the gospel of justification, the gospel of access to the Father through the Son, the gospel of the Spirit operating upon the soul, the gospel of hope, the gospel of repentance, the gospel of sweet comfort, the gospel of God coming to a sinner to dwell with him and at last taking the sinner to be His guest through eternity. This gospel is heard in the soul with power more or less. Now dear congregation and brethren, can you make this statement as in the sight of God? Can you say: We avouch the LORD this day to be our God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes and His commandments and His judgments and to hear His voice. We occupy a solemn position; we occupy a solemn position. We are in God's sight; young and old, we are in God's sight. May we feel it.

AMEN.