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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 26 September 1920

DEUTERONOMY 8 v 2

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."

We took some notice this morning of the Lord's way with His people, that it was a way out of Egypt through the Red Sea into the wilderness, making them pilgrims. It was a way in which He discovered to them that it was His will that they should serve Him by sacrifice, come to Him as He is on the Mercy Seat, before Him as represented by the Mediator, as atoned for by the Priest. This is a beautiful way, full of the exceeding riches of God's grace and shall for ever be to the praise of the glory of His grace. But there is a side to it, to which I want to call your attention this evening, a very sad side but one which it is good for us to look at. It is our part. What does a sacrifice say? It says there are sinners. What does a Priest say? It says that there is a separation between God and men. The Mediator says the same. What does the Mercy Seat say? That there are miserable creatures to be dealt with. And so, in the Lord's way, there is this side, to which now let me call your very strict attention, for he who boasts of redemption and knows nothing of captivity; who talks about the sacrifice of Christ and knows nothing of sin; who boasts of a Mediator and has never been dumb in himself, boasts in vain, glories in vain. The perversity, hypocrisy, profligacy, and perpetual unbelief of the Jews made those types both necessary and beautiful. Our hypocrisy, and our profligacy, and our perversity, and all the stubbornness of our minds and wanderings and idolatry of our hearts makes the Lord Jesus and what He is, what He has done, and what He is now doing, necessary, and when He is made known, make Him beautiful and glorious. It is this which felt, by the Spirit's grace, brings poor people to the Lord's feet like the woman whose sins were forgiven. O the copious tears of penitence that the

Holy Spirit works in sinners when, sensible of their sins, and melted by divine forgiveness and love, they find themselves at the feet of the dear Redeemer, weeping over Him, washing His feet with their tears. We must, as rightly led, be ashamed of ourselves. We must, as rightly led, feel there is nothing in us but causes of shame and blushing as before God, and say, woe unto us, woe unto us, we have sinned. It is no little thing to be a sensible sinner. It is no easy thing to be a sensible sinner. It is a shameful thing, an abominable thing. A filthy thing sin is, and he who is a sinner in his own judgement and feeling and conscience has plenty of trouble. Yes, even though he had nothing here below to trouble him, he has got plenty of trouble in himself, and the more the Lord is pleased to lead us, the more our sorrow will be for sin, and this is evident from the experience of the Scriptures; they set forth this. A prophet, Isaiah, he sees the Lord in a time of trouble, "in the year that king Uzziah died". It can never be anything but a trouble when a good king is removed and peculiarly so it must have been always with Israel. And in that year when king Uzziah died, the prophet saw the Lord, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and people would think that this was so exhilarating a sight, so exalting a sight that there was no room for anything else in the heart and feelings of the prophet, but he tells us otherwise. He says, I saw the Lord; I saw Him in His temple; I saw that His train filled the temple, and I saw the seraphims and each one had six wings. With twain he covered his feet and with twain he covered his face, and with other twain he did fly. And that wondrous, beautiful, glorious sight brought to the prophet such a sight and sense of what he himself was and of what the people, in the midst of whom he lived, were, that he broke out into that lamentation - Woe is me; woe is me, and I would not like to have your religion if any of you have such a religion as this, that you despise that. He who despises that woeful feeling, that cry of woe, will one day, if grace prevent not, howl without any end. O, it is good to repent. We see, as taught of God, enough in us to repent of, to make us sorry, and peculiarly does this sorrow arise and strangely does it work when God is seen. "Mine eyes have seen the Lord". Therefore, woe is me, woe is me. I am not fit to stand before Him. You feel this, do not you, who fear God. I do; I am not fit to stand in a pulpit, not fit to be where saints are, not fit to think of God naturally. I know it is so and spiritually I feel it to be so. And thou shalt remember

this. Remember all the baseness, the idolatry, the hypocrisy, the evil, the bent of mind against God, the determination to have your own way; thou shalt remember this. God did not exclude this from the memory; He never will; He will never exclude a painful recollection from you of what you have been. He wont let it produce despair, but He will make it produce sorrow, especially when He forgives you. Thou shalt remember this and a solemn, but wholesome recollection it is. Remember all your rebellion, all your waywardness, all your unbelief, your limiting of the Holy One of Israel. Remember how you have said, can God do this, and how you have thought that He had brought you into trouble to leave you there. And remember how you wished sometimes that you had never spoken about religion to anybody; that at least you had kept it to yourself. And you remember how you have restrained prayer before God and thought it was no use; how that the very decrees of God have stood up in your minds and made you feel, well all things are settled; why pray, I cannot alter them. "Who, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature or make one hair white or black", and therefore, says the heart, and says the devil, pray no more; and you remember all these things. "O Lord with shame" - one writes, and we sing sometimes - "I do confess my universal emptiness, my poverty and pride." Do you remember yourself? A very solemn thing it is but a very wholesome thing. Thou shalt remember that when God set up the Lord Jesus He set Him up for sinners. When He sent Him into the world He sent Him for sinners. When He gave Him a Leader and a Commander He sent and gave Him to be all that to great, fallen, ignorant creatures; cowards who would say at the very first appearance of trouble, let us go back into Egypt. Why did we leave the world; why leave its pleasures? He gave Him a Leader and Commander to such people who, when they saw the Sea, the Red Sea, before them and knew that Pharaoh was behind them said, would that we had died; what shall we do? Egypt had been a better place for us than this. There is always this connected with a true experience of mercy. As long as you live here and God deals with your conscience, you will never have forgiveness without a tear. You will never have mercy without a mourning. You will have the tear over your sin, and mourning over your baseness. O, but it is sweet weeping, and blessed mourning. "Blessed are they that mourn". Blessed are ye that weep. He that goeth forth in this way and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with

him. May the Lord thus grant that we may not have this out of our view. Indeed I am sure we shall not as He deals kindly with us. We shall always be ready to say, who am I that Thou shouldest deal so with me? I am not like one of Thy people; O Lord, who am I?

And then in the next place, the way of God with the people was very much in providential things and is still. You will never separate providence and the work of grace entirely while you are here. Many a gracious feeling has been produced by some trouble sanctified. Many a time has God's voice been heard in the soul in His providence. So we will look a little at this side of the subject. It is a great thing for God to speak to people. He speaks to them immediately by His Spirit. He speaks to them medially in His providence. "Hear the rod and who hath appointed it". Trouble has a voice and affliction has a voice, and may the Lord help us to hear it. There are some very notable examples of this in the Scripture, this blessed Book, this inspired Book. We will notice a few examples of the way of God with His children in providence and then it may be we shall find our memories moved, stirred, and sent backward, to bring up God's dealings with us. Now you take the case of Abraham, the friend of God. He was blessed, God greatly increased him, but now see how his best blessings came out of trouble. War made him a victor and brought him into connection with Melchisedec, the type of the Lord Jesus, and the less was blessed of the better. And when he was to offer up Isaac, that trying providence brought the best sight that Abraham ever had in his life. He saw the Lord in the mount providing the lamb. "God will provide Himself a lamb". And by this, as the Lord may teach us, we shall see that if the Lord is pleased to come to us in some trouble, some affliction, whereby nature dies, human prospects are blotted out, so to speak, and we are called upon, apparently, to give up our dearest and our best, this will be the very way that God will move and work to bring the best things to us. If you can put to war in the fear of God you will meet your Priest and you will get your victories through the grace and power of God. When you go into trouble you wont go alone for the way of the Lord is this - "I have given Him for a Leader and a Commander to the people". O what a great thing it is to be in the way where God is. I am sure a gracious soul prefers to be in the way where God is, even if it is with trouble, rather than to be in a slippery way down which he may slide suddenly

into destruction. Trouble may be, and often has been, the means that God has used to prevent people going further away from Him. The hedge set about a person and the stone wall, built of hewn stones and fitted in, one to the other, God has used to prevent His mad people from fulfilling their purpose, saying, I will go after my lovers for it was better with me than now. Thou shalt remember this. Thou shalt remember how the Lord dealt with thee, O child of God, when He sent some trouble and that trouble said "Seek the Lord and His strength". Sent some loss that was made to say in your heart by the teaching of the Spirit, seek your treasure above where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt nor thieves break through and steal. And when perhaps He took away your health for a time; it was that you might seek grace to bear the cross and call more upon the Name of the Lord. God's ways are wonderful ways with His children and He says, thou shalt remember them. And there was one very remarkable circumstance in the life of Abraham, the counterpart of which, in a sense, we may find in ourselves. You remember that he had Ishmael born to him and Ishmael was an enemy and always an enemy to the saints of God. Ishmael was a mocker, and he always will be a mocker, and some of us know a good bit about Ishmael. I am sorry I know him too well; an enemy, a mocker. Do you know him? Have you had any intimacy with him? Has he stood in the way to oppose you? Has he mocked at your sacred things? And this Ishmael is of yourself, of your own heart and nature and you can never get rid of him. Sometimes he is cast out but he comes again and mocks. Sometimes God gives you quietness, but Ishmael returns and mocks. And I have thought, in respect of Abraham having Ishmael born to him, it was a very remarkable circumstance that from himself should come an enemy to himself and to all his children by Isaac. Thou shalt remember this. You will carry Ishmael with you, at least he will always be haunting you and hunting you and opposing you and mocking at your most sacred enjoyments. O wretch! but that does not kill him. You may say, O wretch!, but it wont kill him. As long as you live he will be somewhere about you from time to time making his presence felt. His hand will be against you always.

Now you take the way of God with Jacob; a very remarkable way it was. When Jacob was a fugitive and at his worst, God came to him. Truly Erskine writes

Sin for my good shall work and win
But tis not good for me to sin

and Jacob carried the marks and scars of his sin all his life. But God met with him. He lost his home but he found a home in God; God took him in. He left his father but God became a Father to him manifestly. He lost all the guidance of his father but he had a good God to guide him and to say to him, "I will be with thee in all places whithersoever thou goest." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee till I have performed all that I have spoken to thee of". O, it was a great thing and throughout all the oppression and injustice inflicted on him by Laban God appeared for him. His adversity became his prosperity for he sought unto His God and his God spake to him and spake by him. Well my friends, have you got a counterpart of this in your own experience? When sin has troubled you most, has God not come near to you? When you have been at your worst, has He not brought you to your best and made you understand that sovereign grace abounds over sin; that electing love took no notice of good or bad works? "The children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand it was said unto her the elder shall serve the younger". You will be brought to hate sin, but you will bless God for coming to you and delivering you from it. Electing love, redeeming blood, and efficacious grace shall be glorified in the saints of the Most High God. And you take the time of Jacob's life which appears to have been one of his best times when, according to divine direction, he was returning to his own country and to his father's house, and news came to him that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Poor Jacob - I have felt for him knowing a good deal in my own case of what it is for trouble to stir up the memory and the conscience and for that Scripture to come and speak - "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" Do not you believe that Jacob's memory and conscience became active in a moment when the intelligence came to him that Esau was meeting him with 400 men. Would not his memory go back to that day when he deceived his blind father and told a lie, when he provoked his injured brother Esau? And now the day of retribution is coming, says conscience; these 400 men are 400 swords; what will you do? Do you know that; trouble awakening the conscience; trouble bringing to your memory what you have done and you have hardly, for the moment, had courage to say - "O remember not against me former iniquities." And yet the Lord, what did He do? Drew Jacob to Himself, gave him power over the Angel, changed his name into Israel, for as a prince Jacob then had power with God and prevailed.

Guilt shall never destroy but it does humble the people of God. You will not be able to shut your eyes to it. You will not be able to wipe your mouth and say, it is nought; it is nought. But the Holy Ghost will bring the blood of the everlasting covenant to you, and will work in you that spirit of faith and prayer that shall give you power over the Angel, and you will prevail to get the best blessing, the most intimate communion perhaps of your whole lifetime. When you are at your worst you will come to your best. When you are ready to faint new strength will be given, and when these swords point at you God will turn them all into their scabbards and make the very thing that you feared to be the best of all. I have, said Jacob to his brother Esau - after his brother had kissed him and there was peace - I have seen thy face as it had been the face of God. You think of it; here was a face on which he expected to see vengeance written, a face on which he thought never would be a smile for himself, and that very face was to him as the face of God because there was an answer to prayer. O, Jacob saw that smile as an answer to prayer. Has trouble ever smiled on you? Bless God, some of us have found it to be so, and we remember this. You will go back to certain times in your memories, now and again in your lives, and find that there the Lord met with you, and there, as it is written of Jacob, you will say, there He blessed me; there He delivered me; there I got a sight of God's well-pleased face; there I had a taste of His mercy; there I saw my way to heaven. I saw my God; I saw my friend; I saw my Intercessor; I saw His hand coming between Esau and myself. I saw that He blunted every sword; I saw that nothing could harm me under His divine favour. O blessed way, this.

You take David; what a wondrous example we have of the ways of God with David. He, a shepherd, has coming against the flock a lion and a bear, a terrifying circumstance. But O what did he experience? The Lord delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear. You have understood that at times in your own experience have not you? The Lord has brought you into solemn circumstances, devouring circumstances, circumstances like lions and bears and you have feared you would be torn to pieces, instead of which God has given you power to lay hold, and delivered you. The Lord delivered me; I laid hold of the lion and hold of the bear; the Lord delivered me; His was the power. He was anointed king over Israel by God;

Samuel was told to anoint David. O, but the way to the throne, to the kingdom, what a way it was. Persecution from the occupant of the throne, Saul. Persecution for years, distress, hunted about. He was hunted like a flea upon the mountains; told to flee as a bird to his mountain, to get away. God brought him to it. And David fell, David sinned; he sinned remarkably. This remarkable saint sinned remarkably. Pride hurt him and pride slew thousands of Israelites; the pride of David slew many people, that is provoked the Lord to do it. Did you ever get a fall by your pride and some trouble came on the heel of it, and your conscience said to you, you know what this has come for. The Lord loves humility and He resists the proud. Do you understand that? He fell still deeper, and His God met him; and how? In two remarkable ways God met fallen David. One was by a solemn rebuke and cutting conviction - "Thou art the man". O, said David, I shall die. And that is what every one more or less quickly feels when some conviction of some sin, some pride, comes; I have sinned, I shall die. And then the other way was still more wonderful; more wonderful and more blessed. "The Lord hath put away thy sin". O the happiness and the sorrow mingling in this blessed man's soul; the way of God was wonderful to him. The happiness, I say, and the sorrow how they mingled. God's love and the man's grief, how they mingled. You will never forget yourself and never forgive yourself when the Lord forgives you and blesses you and holds fellowship with you. There are many other examples of this kind, of the way of God with His children, which they are to remember.

Asa, a good man and a good king, came into difficulties. Enemies, a multitude, came against him and he did not know what to do. But faith rose in his heart, blessed faith, and he said to God, "It is little with Thee to help with many or with them that have no might. Help us O Lord our God, for in Thy Name we go against this great company." And you know what the Lord wrought. And again, his son Jehoshaphat was in similar trouble and he said - "Lord, we know not what to do, but our eyes are up unto Thee". And one would think that these good men and good kings might, recollecting all these circumstances, say, it was good for us that these enemies came; we got near the Lord by them and He showed His remarkable wisdom and power and love and goodness and faithfulness. Bless God that ever these enemies came against us. And cannot you say so of your

troubles, and difficulties and things. Have not you blessed the Lord that certain troubles came to you; blessed Him that you were driven to your knees; blessed Him that He appeared for you. "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee". Your enemies will feed you sometimes; ravens shall feed God's people. Let me name two instances out of the Scripture to you. One was the prophet fed by ravens, and when the brook dried up the ravens stopped coming, but God was there, God was there. Said He to His servant, go to Sarepta, I have commanded a widow to feed thee. And nature would say, a rich widow, of course. No, a poor widow, gathering two sticks wherewith to make a fire to bake her last bit of meal and then she and her son should die. O, but this was God's opportunity. The empty barrel was God's place; the empty cruise was God's place. Your emptiness is God's place, O child of God. Many and many a saint has proved that his emptiness has proved to be the place God designed to come into with His all-supplying fullness, with His goodness and His mercy and His faithfulness.

Take the case of those four lepers. They said, now if we enter the city we shall perish, there is nothing but hunger there; if we stay here we shall perish, there is nothing but hunger here. If we fall to the enemy they may save us alive or if they slay us we can but die. So they went to the camp and they found it deserted and thus their enemy brought plenty of food for these hungry, famished Israelites. My friends, what a God you have if you have the God of Israel for your help. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord His God. O what a happy state the man is in who has the Lord God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is there. You cannot be too poor, you cannot be too empty and I will say you cannot be too vile, too sinful, too wicked for the Lord. I do believe what I say. I believe Hart felt the same when he said

You cant come too filthy
Come just as you are

Christ is the Friend of sinners. God is the God of sinners. God in His providence is a God of sinners and in His way is the God of sinners. His way is in the whirlwind, in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm

And thou shalt remember all this.

Now I must leave this part and come to what I said in the morning should be the second point to notice, namely the remembrance of this. This is the way; now there is to be a memory of it and first of all it is a very humbling remembrance and that, not only because we also, at the same time, remember our sins, but because His ways are humbling, His mercy is humbling, His love is humbling. "Is this the manner of man, O Lord." You look on sometimes feeling the highest privilege is yours to look on while the Angel of the Lord does wondrously. And two things will sometimes, at the same time, be with you. Namely, God's amazing love to your soul in Christ, and then God's amazing goodness to you in providence. But this is the way to the city you are seeking; self-denial, self-denial, and hating self, losing self. Does He say - "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? Then do not expect a carpeted way; look for a rough way. Does He say, I will sustain you? Then do not look for a cross made up of a few feathers; expect a weight. Does He say, I will guide thee with My eye? Then do not expect to be very wise in yourself. If a man thinks himself wise, he is a fool, says the Apostle Paul. O but what a blessing, what a blessing; sometimes the Lord will indicate to you that He is your protector as He was the protector of Abraham in his dangers. Sometimes He will let you see how He has made provision for you - Thy bread shall be given thee; thy water shall be sure. Not only bread for your body but for your soul. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen". But this blessing is eternal life. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." "That the blessing of Abraham may come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ". You will know on whose head to put the crown when you get the blessing. You will know who shall have, who ought to have - and you will be determined that He shall have - the praise, even Jesus Christ. He wrought the righteousness that you are to wear for ever. He opened the fountain of precious blood that you are to be washed in and made clean for ever and ever. He broke the bread of life

and gave to you that you are to eat and die no more and therefore all the praise, all the glory, must be given to Him. May the good Lord grant that we may have this blessing of Abraham. And the high privilege of sitting at His table is given to His dear children who walk in the ordinances as He has laid them down and that comfortable thing belongs to some of us this evening, and may we be enabled to come to this table in a becoming spirit, which is not a spirit of self-goodness and self-justification. It is a spirit of this sort

A guilty, weak and helpless worm.
On Thy kind arms I fall
Be Thou my strength and righteousness
My Jesus and my All

AMEN.