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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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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."

I think that a very personal reason has to do with my reading of this word for a text and without wishing to obtrude my personal case on your notice, yet I can but just make a passing reference to it. Today I complete 38 years of service among you and one's memory is somewhat full of that rather long period - I suppose it is a long period for a man to have laboured among one people. 39 years ago on the 12 of last June I stood for the first time in this pulpit and for 38 years I have laboured constantly among you. How I came is well before my mind; things which we have passed through together; the, so to speak, chapel full of people that I have buried or seen taken away in the providence of God from the town. The sorrows - blessed be God, not quarrels - but the sorrows and difficulties, the liftings up and castings down that I myself have experienced, are more or less present with me, and it is not an evil, but a good thing, according to the Scripture for us individually and collectively to remember God's dealings with us. As we do so we shall never leave out our dealings with Him and those are very shameful, but His dealings are very merciful, tender, wise, full of correction, chastisement, captivities, deliverances. A Saviour raised up and sent, a great One, who, though we have provoked Him greatly, has not wholly turned away from us; and the good Spirit of God given to us. Though we have vexed and grieved Him by our rebellions, He has not entirely left us, and His presence and His mercies have sometimes been made known; according to the prophet Isaiah, been made known by His fighting against us, sometimes by sharp rebukes in the conscience, sometimes by painful providences in order to bring us back, to bring us to confess sin and to cry mightily to God who, in His tenderness, has

heard prayer and restored us. Israel was about to enter on a new life. They were coming to the end of a long affliction, their wilderness journeys. And during the 40 years of their wanderings. They had had singular proofs of God's care for them, miraculous interventions of omnipotence, strange and alluring manifestations of His pity and all these things Moses was inspired to recount. He was to rehearse the mighty acts of God to this nation, in the ears of the people, ere they left the wilderness and entered into the goodly land of promise given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he would not have the people indifferent to the way they had been led. Neither will the Lord have His people now indifferent to the way He has led them. His dealings with them are not the things the Apostle Paul left behind and which we are to leave behind. We are to carry the goodness of God with us in the manifestations of it into all places and unto the day of our death. "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness". And thou shalt remember that God had an end in it; that the leading was not an end in itself; it was "to humble thee, to prove thee". To whom? Why to themselves. "To know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no." And I need but just remind you that the discovery made to these people was always this - "No". Their profession was, "yes"; their conduct was "no". Who could lift up his face to God now in this chapel and say that God's dealings with him, providences and heavenly instructions had brought to light universal obedience in his heart and in his conduct. Who must not, blessed with grace, fall flat before the Lord and say, it has always been "No". My heart is always treacherous and my ways wrong. Thou O God art righteous; we have sinned.

Let us look a little, as enabled, then first of all at the leading. "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee", and secondly at the remembrance - "Thou shalt remember". God's dealings are precious things, precious stones, jewels, riches. They come out of His heart; they are mercies, covenant mercies, signs of omnipotence, evidences of His love, His tenderness, His regard, His wisdom, His omniscience, His omnipotence. Therefore they are not to be wasted but to be remembered, and to be treasured up. They are to be used as stones. Set thee up high heaps, set up waymarks, raise up Ebenezers. Praise Him in the highest, praise Him in heaven, praise

Him on earth; praise Him sun, moon, stars, fire, water, snow, hail; all creatures, all things, praise Him. He has used them, made use of them for good; made use of them for instruction and for humbling. Therefore let us praise Him. And thirdly the end which the great and terrible and merciful God has in view in leading people about, to humble them and to prove them, test them, and bring themselves to the light that they may see themselves in the light. "And know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."

First, the way that God has led us. Let us go back to a certain time in the life of this nation. They had been oppressed in Egypt 430 years. God had multiplied them there but they were not a nation of warriors. They had no prowess, no training in warfare. They had been slaves in hard bondage, in a furnace of iron. They had felt the lash on their backs when they were unable to take the unjustly required tale of bricks, no straw being delivered them wherewith to do their work. They had been oppressed and had no power against their oppressors, but one thing was given to them; they cried unto the Lord in their affliction and He said to Moses, I am come down; I have heard their cry by reason of their affliction, and I am come down to look on them and to deliver them, and the steps toward deliverance only made their bondage the harder and their captivity the more galling, for the Egyptians oppressed them but the more. But the day came when they were brought forth with a mighty hand and outstretched arm and they were brought from Egypt, out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage. This may set forth the mighty work of God in a sinner's soul when He would bring him from the world and bring him into a concern about eternity and exercise him with the things of eternity and about sin and the law and bring him into a felt condition of ruin, of utter helplessness and weakness and fear, not knowing what the next step will be and how it will issue. But God brings people out of the world into the wilderness where they have conflict. It is a mighty work of grace to bring a sinner and separate him from the world in which he has lived and from Egyptian darkness in which he has crept and Egyptian bondage that had brought nothing but misery to him. It is a mighty work.

Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding

We must sing that. And God brought them through the Red Sea. There is to be a sea between the church and the world. I wish it were so today; it has been but it is not now as it used to be. There is to be a line between the church and the world. Between Israel and Egypt there was to be a sea, the Red Sea. A miracle brought them through it; they went through it as by dry land, which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. And it is a miracle of divine power and grace and love that brings poor sinners from the Egyptian world into the wilderness where they must be pilgrims. These people were brought into the wilderness, that is the first thing. Did you get a start in your religion, a good start? It is worth looking into closely. Did you get a good start? Did the world know that there was a change? Did your family notice a change? I do not mean as to the nature of it, or the issue of it, but did the world notice a change? However you were brought up, you were dead in trespasses and sins. When the change, the mighty, the wondrous, the gracious change came, was it observed? Well, may the Lord make that point quite clear, whether the case is a case of divine separation. And then the people came into trouble. They soon were thirsty, and they were soon rebellious. Ignorant, they rebelled, wondered why they had been brought out of Egypt, wished themselves back. And this may set forth the trouble people come into about their soul when the great change has taken place in them, the nature of which they may not at all understand. They are brought into a conflict and they are brought to be in want and there is no supply. There were three things Israel could not do and they soon proved it. They could not create bread, they could not bring water to themselves. They could not sow and reap in the wilderness and they could not buy, and so they were dependent. And now it must be bread or death - and if you are in the wilderness it will be bread or death - and God came and gave them bread. All 40 years and bread came every morning from heaven to sustain them; God sustained them. What an amazement. What is this, they said. The first little seeds that they gathered, that white seed, that corriander seed; what is this, they said to Moses. It is manna, it is God's bread. And when people are hungry for the bread of life they get some of it. We none of us have had all of Christ, but if we have had a little of Christ we have had all Christ. All bread, my friends, as to the parts of bread, is in the crumb; all bread. And a whole Redeemer is in the least of the work of redemption that is brought to you by the good Spirit of

Christ. Think of it; if you have had any bread, you have had all bread as to the constituent parts. And these people got bread. And then they were thirsty; what were they to do? Must they die of thirst? No, the flinty rock shall yield them living water. This, smitten by the commandment of God, brought them the refreshment that they needed, and so mercy has come from the wounded side of the dear Redeemer, Jesus Christ. That has come in some measure. Mercy's streams have reached thirsty souls here. Ah, and it has been wonderful to partake of mercy, free mercy, great mercy, undeserved mercy and, to guilty people, unexpected mercy. But it has come, sweetly flowed down from the wounds of Christ and brought by the good Spirit of Christ. Oh some Scripture has given encouragement, some thought has been dropped into the heart by the Spirit concerning God and Christ, and mercy and salvation. Oh some intimation of the Lord's love has been let down to the sinner and he has found that despair has not been allowed to shut him up. And this beginning of the way, and these two steps of the way, indicate to people that God has not forgotten them. No, He has not forgotten to be gracious. But unbelief in the heart of God's people is ready to conclude like rebellious Israel that they had been brought out of Egypt to be killed in the wilderness. Distinguishing grace saved the elect from that desert of unbelief, alone for His Name's sake. Moses was so astonished at one time in the trouble that he said to the Lord, what will the enemy say if they are destroyed in the wilderness; what will the enemy say? And the Lord said - Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy - His Name, His honour were at stake in this great matter. They were led by the Lord in these three points that I have named to you.

And now look at another thing; the way in which the Lord led His people was this. They were more or less brought to see, in the types that God set up, the sweet types, two things. First, the Mercy Seat. Make thee a Mercy Seat and I will meet with thee there and there will I commune with thee. O what a way; a Mercy Seat. Why that is just what we need.

Mercy good Lord, mercy I crave
This is the total sum

How often in the beginning we have had to go aside from all creatures

and pour out a troubled heart and distressed feelings and distraut conditions before the Lord at the Mercy Seat. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Well, you will never forget some of your visits there, you people of God; never forget how kindly the Lord has whispered into your heart some good thing, let down some smile, or spoken some gracious promise at the Mercy Seat, as if He should say - "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Mercy's angel form has appeared; Mercy's sweet, sacred voice has been heard; Mercy's heavenly touch has been felt even in the wilderness. It has made travelling somewhat easy when this has been the experience.

And the second thing in my mind to name is this, they were soon taught by type that there was an atonement. There was an altar erected according to divine direction and there was a burnt offering, a whole burnt offering. This comes into the wilderness journey, a burnt offering. Life for life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand; this is the law; - "The soul that sinneth it shall die" And now these people in the wilderness had one thing set before them, namely this, there is the offering, the blessed offering, setting out in a clear-cut type the Lord Jesus who should, in the fullness of time, come and offer Himself without spot to God and shed His blood, whereby the sins of His people should be covered, washed away, and they stand pardoned by God Himself. Now however rough the way, and however difficult, and however full of trouble, you may find this - you will have, you that have had this, as being led by the Lord - you were brought one day to look at the atonement, to view the Lord Jesus, to see that one offering whereby He perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and there you were led to fix your hope and build for eternity; that offering you were taught to plead. In it, so to express the word, in it you were led to God, led into His goodness, and His love; led into the promise of the gospel, led to see that the way through the wilderness, though difficult, was safe; that the wrath of God should not, could not, fall on you because of the intervention of Christ who interposed His precious blood, who offered Himself without spot to God; whose vicarious offering is the bread and the life and the peace and the hope and the comfort and the joy and the heaven of all His people. And this is to be remembered. There are many providences to be remembered but I first of all want to

bring this that has eternity in it. Can you remember when you got a sight from the Lord Jesus. You were in some trouble perhaps, soul trouble at any rate, perhaps other troubles as well. You were in the wilderness far from God and far from the world; a poor, lonely creature, condemned to die by the voice of your own conscience; none, apparently, between a holy God and yourself, and now there came this great wonder

Behold a scene of matchless grace
Tis Jesus in the sinner's place

Men never forget that wholly who have had it; they cannot give it up really when once they have received it. It makes a mark on the spirit; it indelibly fixes the image of Christ upon the soul, though that image is not perceived very often. It makes peace with God and here, faith laying her hand on the Lord Jesus, makes peace with God. "Let him take hold of My strength and make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me." Whenever you lay the hand of your faith on the Lord Jesus as offering Himself without spot to God, then you make peace with God. No other way; No, you cannot take your tears and your prayers, and your resolves and your wishes and lay them before the Lord and then lay hold of Him and make peace with Him by these. No, a guilty sinner laying His hand on Christ's atoning work, by this and this alone does he make peace with God. "Let him take hold of My strength." Christ is the strength of God. Let the sinner take hold of My strength by precious faith and make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me. It shall not be a matter of doubt alway. He shall make peace and sooner or later he shall feel peace with Me; feel it in his conscience. Ah, but these people rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, and I am disposed to believe that one of the chief sins that the people committed in the wilderness was when they said, we loathe this light food. Others may think their greatest sin was when they danced around that golden calf and sang to it - This be thy god O Israel that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt - and it was a terrible sin, but still I am disposed to think that the greatest sin was loathing the manna, for the manna was a very lively type of the bread of life, the Lord Jesus, and to loathe that manna was to loathe this precious bread whose type that manna was. And you remember the severe and solemn judgement of God upon the people who said they

loathed it. Then what did the Lord do? The people were dying, serpents were biting them, and the poison of the bites soon ran through the veins of the people and many died. Then the Lord's pity came, His bowels of mercy flowed. Said He to Moses, make a serpent of brass and lift it up. Hart says on this, as if the Lord should say

Rear it high that all might view it
Bid the bitten look unto it
Life attended every look

Well, dear friends, and what is this leading? Have not you - in your wickedness, when you have rebelled against the Lord, and disesteemed the Lord Jesus Christ in some way and been afflicted therefore by God in your conscience, and perhaps too in providence - have not you, in such a case, been led to look to Him who says - "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved, for I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour." O sweet mercy, wondrous leading. Led, as it were, out of the grave that was now open to receive thee; led to the source and centre and fullness and sweetness of life that healed the disease. O sweet leading; it was a gracious leading. God led them to look on the serpent that Moses made by divine direction and lifted high for them to look at. This is not done in a corner; the gospel published and lifted high that the Lord's people, bitten and smitten, wounded and dying, may have their eyes directed by the Spirit to that great Object. Directed, I say, by the Spirit, to look to Christ, and life does attend the believing look, and it will always attend it in your own conscience. "Thou shalt remember all the way" - the way of the gospel - "that the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness."

And there was another leading which I would mention to you, namely this, that they were led to know, not only the need of, but the truth that there was between them and God a Mediator. There was a great High Priest, and once a year he entered into the Holiest of all, not without blood. He had on his High Priestly robe; at the hem of it a pomegranate and a bell, and in that arrayed he, with the blood God ordered, entered into the Holiest of all. A pomegranate perhaps to indicate the fruitfulness of His appearing in the presence of God; a

bell it may be to indicate that the people should hear that he was still living, though in that awful place, and that his intercession was prevailing. And what will this show, what does it show to the Lord's people, but that there is a great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, who has entered into heaven with His Own blood and is there ever living to intercede. And has not this doctrine, this great truth, been made out to some of you? Have you not, in your troubles, and, conscious of the greatness and the holiness and the majesty of God, and that you felt He was not approachable in your own present condition of sinfulness; not approachable when you consider Him as simply in Himself the great, the mighty, and the terrible God - I say, have you not felt deeply your need of a Divine Mediator? O but says this great God in compassion, there is One between us. "There is One God and One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus", and your approaches to Me must be made in Him and through Him. And this is so encouraging and full of instruction that all who receive it remember from time to time the sweetness of it, the greatness of it, the fitness of it, the beautiful fitness of it. Here is a dumb sinner, a holy God against him as he feels, and now appears the Man Christ Jesus. "One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus". And what has faith said in the heart? This suits me. You could sing, some of you, with some understanding of it, what you were singing just now

A Man there is, a real Man
With wounds still gaping wide
From which rich streams of blood once ran
In hands and feet and side

This wondrous Man of whom we tell
Is true Almighty God
He bought our souls from death and hell
The price His Own heart's blood

And thou shalt remember this. All these things were brought before Israel in type and Moses said, now remember all that God has taught you. Remember His service. His word to Pharaoh was - "Let My people go that they may serve Me." And this was His service; the tabernacle, the altar; the altar of burnt offering, the altar of

incense, the Holy of Holies, the Priest, the High Priest, the burnt offering, the morning lamb and the evening lamb; these were preached. This is the gospel preached to our fathers in the wilderness, and the manna rained from heaven set out Christ, and the water coming from the flinty rock showing forth the living water of life, the eternal, the blessed gospel of God. Now has God led us this way? This is the way of life, this is the gospel my friends. First in type, now in the great anti-type, Jesus Christ and His all-efficacious work. Thou shalt remember this way. And if I said no more, perhaps if God were to open the truths to you that I have just hinted at, you would say, it is quite enough for us to remember that God brought us to feel death, then led us to life; made us hungry, then gave bread from heaven for us. We were brought to thirst, then the smitten rock yielded us its sweet, living water for our refreshment. Thou shalt remember all this.

"The Lord thy God hath led thee." The gospel is not a human device; the types were not human types, that is not given by any creature, but by God Himself; all living types of a living Jesus; the types that set out clearly both His work and the vicarious nature of it, whereby His people were brought in the wilderness to God, to know Him, to see Him, to serve Him, to love Him, to trust in Him, to depend upon Him. And they were led this way.

And one more word on this point; they were led to the very edge, the verge of the land of promise. Their clothes had not waxed old, their feet had not swelled during all their forty years wanderings hither and thither; God had preserved them. And what does this point out to us, but that the saints of the Most High are preserved in their faintness, their weakness, their cowardice, their failures, their unfaithfulness. Notwithstanding the Lord has kept them; their robe never wears out, for it is Christ's righteousness. Their shoes wax not old for they are the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace. And therefore, the perseverance of a weak creature, a poor, broken-down believer, is assured to him by the Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit in his heart; he shall get through; now he shall enter the land of promise. If, when the Lord started some of us, we had been told of the dangers that would come to us, the difficulties we should have to meet, the conflicts we should be engaged in, the enemies who

would rise up against us in our own hearts, the horrible sins, the wickedness we should feel and do, we should have been disposed to say, who can be saved. Who can get to heaven, who can get through all these deaths? But now, when we look back, what are we to say? Few and evil have been the days of our pilgrimage and God, who has fed us all our life long, He has delivered us again and again. And, using Paul's word, we may say, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." (2 Corinthians 1 v 9 and 10) And the land now was before them, a goodly land. They were to go and live in houses they had not built; eat the fruit of trees which they had not planted; vineyards and olives, and trees that they had not planted, these they were to eat. God had brought them in His faithfulness to this place and, says Moses, though I am not to go in with you, you are about to enter that goodly land, the land of promise. Remember how you came to it, the dangers through which you passed, the difficulties and the deaths and the troubles, all of which you have come safely through. Do not forget and do not forget God who has brought you through them. Remember them. So may we remember these points that I have named and others also which at present I am not able to mention; providential troubles and various conflicts which you may remember for yourselves and remember that God has brought you through these things.

AMEN.