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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 20 December 1933

DEUTERONOMY 8 v 2, 3 and 4

"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.
And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and
fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did
thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that
man doth not live by bread alone, but by every
word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the
LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee
neither did thy foot swell these forty years."

A wonderful word; before we can remember a way we must have been
in it. Forty years of experience these people of God had to look back
upon, and we, as far as God has led us, have to look back upon the way
we have come. Not always have God's people been able to believe that
He was leading them, because of their strange wandering, like sheep
forgetting their resting place and turning to vain things. It is
difficult for me ever to speak in public of myself, but as you know,
most of you, I have completed now 86 years, and God has been wonderful
to me. I just want to acknowledge His kindness, His lovingkindness;
O how free it has been. But it is very difficult when your eyes are
turned to your own behaviour, misbehaviour, unbelief, hardness of
heart, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, the
forgetfulness of God, the hypocrisy, vanity, corruption in the
wilderness; truly Israel represents in many grievous particulars
the way God's people walk. But when the eye is set on God's dealings,
when it is seen by faith that even the waywardness, the sin that so
easily besets us, always has done, God has turned to a good account,
then it is that there is real matter for gratitude, and what Erskine
says is true

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

and this everyone is brought to an understanding of, an experience of, more or less distinctly.

God, in this text, is the leader; may we remember that. "Thou shalt remember". When you look back, when you are in the land of promise, you look back in your memory to Egypt, the fleshpots, the purgings, the furnace of iron, the difficulties that you had; when you remember these; when also you remember the miracles wrought by God in Egypt on your behalf, and how He smote the first born in the land of Egypt - for His mercy endureth for ever - then you realise that He has been the leader. You could not have found the way, you could not have managed to get deliverance, you could not have done this or that if the Lord had not been the leader. And I would keep this before you a little while this evening as enabled, that your steps have been ordered, your matters managed, by the Lord; that He has been, as it is written of Him in Isaiah, given for a Commander of the people, a Leader of the people. God gave Him, Jesus Christ. Before His incarnation He was coming again and again into the church in the wilderness, and after it, since His blessed ascension, He has been doing the same thing more distinctly, more immediately.

Led thee, took thee by the hand. What more can a poor, wayward, silly child who did not know himself and was not aware of the dangers in which he would be running, need? God took him by the hand. Think of how God has dealt with you in that, that you would have destroyed yourselves. I would; without doubt I should have destroyed myself many times, but the Lord will not allow. Where He loves He loves everlastingly, and takes a poor child and leads him against himself, against his inclinations, against his lusts and pride and vanity and leads him into some particular things. Let me mention one or two. First, He leads into a knowledge of your own weakness and dependence. "He humbled thee". We need much to humble us; we need to see, and we are made to see and feel the wickedness of our nature. I believe, if I may use such a word, the trouble we put the Lord to to open our eyes, to humble our souls by leading us into a distinct knowledge of our fall in Adam, of our corruption, of our constant will against the will of God. "What He wills is best", we sing, but what we will naturally we want to have, we desire to, attempt to, do. No, says God, and so He graciously leads, when He is not known, or seen, or felt, to be

leading. When God is opening our eyes to see our fall, our wickedness, the disposition we have to fight against Him, we do not realise that He is in it for our good. 'Tis very humbling to know that you are a sinner, and to grow in the knowledge of your sinfulness. Just as these children of Israel when they were oppressed in Egypt and when Moses came to ^{them} him and they first believed him and then, because their trouble increased, they charged him with having deceived them, and their trouble grew and they could not believe that God had anything to do with this matter of their promised deliverance. So when God leads us into a deeper and a deeper and yet a deeper knowledge of ourselves, though the intention is - and the experience comes to that - to humble us, we little think He is with us.

"And to prove thee" - well, this is a solemn business - "To know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no". What has been the effect of that proving to you. Has it not been, No, you would not, you could not, keep His commandments? "Whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no". My nature has said, No. Ignorant of inability sometimes, and conscious of a disposition to do this or that, the reply, in conduct, if not in word, has been, No. What an emphasis is put upon your vile, wicked, way, your stubborn will, when you practically have said, No; I want my own way. Yes, you may have said to the Lord you would not do what He told you. It is very solemn, but it is a truth. "And He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger". And the prodigal was starving, life dying out for hunger, and no man gave him even the food of the swine. God suffered him to hunger. When you are hungry and the world can give you nothing to satisfy you, nothing to appease that sense, keen sense, of hunger, yea, when it comes still more distinctly to you that you would give your best, you would give your all in this world, for what your soul prays and you cannot get that, that answers to this experience: "He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger" God is not against you even if this be your present experience, If it be a spiritual experience, and if, in some measure, it be even providential experience with some of the Lord's people, it is not against them, but it is very painful, very solemn, and very bitter. You go to the Bible, and there is nothing in it for you. Go to prayer, there is no access for you. Go to the means of grace which God has

ordained and blessed often to some; no blessing to you, no feeling, no taking up by the minister of your case. Hear the Lord's people speak of their experience, and some of us have done that - O how I used to get behind some good men after a service to listen to what they had to say about the things of God - but then when you have heard these things you have cut yourself off perhaps, and said, I do not know them. God suffers this hunger, that is, sends it, intends it to be felt, to become a real experience. And the poor creature, now famished and strength decaying and hope dying; what happens? The soul is humbled. "He humbled thee". He made thy proud heart know that man does not live by bread alone. He made a man humble in his spirit by a sense of absolute dependence. The independence of our proud nature has the back of it broken by God's dealing, by His suffering us to hunger. "He suffered thee to hunger". Taking the whole nation as a person, He suffered thee, Israel, to hunger in the wilderness.

And what did this hunger do beside humbling? Made you fret. O, said Israel in the wilderness to Moses, why have you brought us here? We remember the leeks and the onions, when we had enough food; now here we are; we cannot grow anything in this wilderness; we cannot buy anything in this wilderness; we cannot produce any food for ourselves; what are we to do? You have had that experience, some of you, have you not? Just an absolute hunger; no evidence, no prospect, no ability to get food to nourish you. God intends this for good. Yes, He means good to a sinner when He wont let that sinner have Egyptian fare; when He brings that sinner into a barren wilderness where there is no sustenance to be had. "Then they cried unto the Lord". That is the place, to come into necessity. Trouble is useful, made so by the Lord; necessity is useful. But then there is pointed out to the soul in this condition the source of supply. Who points that out? The Holy Ghost; the source of supply that was pointed out to the publican - "God be merciful to me a sinner"; to the prodigal son - He remembered His Father's house. The dying thief had the same instruction. Dying, as he was, in guilt and punishment for his sin, yet that came to him - there is the Lord on the cross. Who gave him that sight? The Holy Ghost. And that opened to him a source of hope and of mercy and he cried. One of the two thieves railed; this one was stopped and he had faith given to him and saw in Christ

omnipotence, grace and mercy and saw also that Christ was going to heaven. "Lord remember me" he said, "when Thou comest into Thy kingdom". Now that source of supply is open to you, not only by reading it in the Scripture, but by a touch, a leading, a light, a mercy, a lively exercise of your faith, and you cry unto God. He sends deliverance. "And fed thee with manna", which they did not know. They took it to Moses and said, what is it? This is the bread the Lord giveth you. "He fed thee with manna". Angels' food, as Hart writes, is poor compared with the bread of life that the Lord Jesus is, and faith is blessed to receive it. This is receiving Christ: "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you". Now when faith, standing in the power of God, receives Christ as the Saviour, embraces Him in the arms of faith - even though there be not a full sense of assurance of interest - there is that which, in the spirit of it, is eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and there is life. The manna sustained life in these hungry people; it renewed their strength; it gave them vigour for another journey in the wilderness, before they had again to sojourn and find some fresh trouble. So every communication made by the Lord to a soul that is hungry for Him gives it strength, new strength to take a few more steps in the way of life. You mark that in your own experiences. When you get a touch, a glimpse of Christ, some sweet sense of His goodness and mercy, I say then you get new vigour in your faith and your soul is strengthened and encouraged, and you are enabled to obey the Lord, who says now you must go forward, take another journey, go here to a place of which I am telling you; you are enabled to do it. He led thee in the wilderness; He humbled thee that thou mightest know what was in thy heart. We should never know it otherwise. "And He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not". And yet, when you got the taste of Christ you knew Him; when you heard His voice you knew it; and you could feel in your soul when you were again looking and hearing - if I heard that voice again I should know it. "My sheep know my voice" You know that. Now to remember that is very gracious, very helpful. I have found it very difficult in my long life, and last night when awake I had many recollections of the long life I have had to live, 86 years, and all my conscious life, what have I been, what have I done? One could only say, Lord do not let one sink under the gloom of looking on an unprofitable, a sinful life; selfish,

self-seeking, and everything that is evil; backslidings innumerable. Lord do not let one sink under the burden of guilt. And when a fresh view was given of how gracious He had been, the solemn leadings and convictions of sin, and the leadings of a kind, mysterious providence, then hope sprang up and more than hope, a sweet certainty that ere long one would be in heaven. Now you who fear the Lord, do, as you can, by His grace, go back. Remember, according to this Scripture, "Thou shalt remember". You have got to a certain stage, you have reached a certain age in grace, you have gone this way and that way. Now when you look back you may be tempted to say I have been so unprofitable, I have been so wicked, I have so frequently backslidden and turned away from God, I cannot hope. Do not give way to that. Remember what Paul said to the Hebrews "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God". When you depart by your recollections from Him you are only adding sin to sin, but when by faith you can plead what Christ has done and is doing, plead His precious blood, His glorious righteousness, hang there, depend there, cast yourself there, and you will find that you are fed again. Mercy will again sustain you and love will comfort you and power will hold you up. "Which thou knewest not" - but then you came to know it - "that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only". You are not to find something in yourself to nourish yourself; you are just to find this, that you will die if God sustain you not. An easy thing to say, but a difficult thing to find and prove. But if the Lord be pleased to withhold bread from us, the bread of life, we languish, we faint, and every grace languishes. Prayer, that should be strong, is weak, and few visits of faith for a time to the Lord, because bread is withheld. "That thou mightest know that man doth not live by bread only"; doth not live by anything within his reach. The Lord will have this pressed on us; we are to learn it again and again, and when we have thought perhaps, now we have got some establishment, if we lean on that establishment for further establishment, that establishment will fail us; it will languish for need, for want, of bread. You are not to live on grace, your own grace; you are not to live on anything. Experience! Experience is matter for gratitude but not for dependence. Little harbours, built by the Lord, the Master of the way, for pilgrims just to refresh themselves in, are not their heaven, not their end. They get something there, but they go to sleep there

sometimes. Bunyan knew that to his cost. Hart knew it when he said that sometimes we seem to make great progress in the way, but night comes on and we find that we quite mistook the way. We are not to live on any grace in us, but to live on Him who gives the grace, who is the grace, who is the support, who is the strength of Israel.

"But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." This, of course, is a great truth in respect of providence. The reproductiveness of nature, of earth, of sea, God orders and brings to pass year by year to sustain His creatures. But O, how true it is spiritually; we want the Word of the living God. Not always given in very powerful manner, not always very distinctly and constantly, but occasionally just a touch. A word that you read many a time comes into your mind, it instructs you, it tells you of some kindness in God, of some mercy in the Lord Jesus, of something concerning the Holy Ghost. Now you live by that; that really is a nourishment to your faith. You understand me; I know you do who have had it. The Word of God thus coming is a nourishment to your faith, a strength, and you really take fresh courage and say to your soul - take courage, my soul. You can say with Newton, perhaps,

Who ordered Gideon forth
To storm the invaders' camp
With arms of little worth
A pitcher and a lamp

and you can feel that your faith receives nourishment. Now that is an instruction and, as you have had it, the Lord help you to look back on it; and say, now I will lean on this? No, do not do that. Thank Him for it and ask Him to renew it that is to say, give it you again, or some other word. "Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD". It may be a hymn, a verse of a hymn. You read it often, take no notice of it perhaps because it has not been given you, but when it comes with life and instruction into your heart, then it is food, nourishing you. "Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD". It may be by the ministry. God does mercifully use the ministry still to help His people. Not a whole sermon, but perhaps a few sentences, may get hold of you. You almost forget what follows, but you knew the minister was speaking because you got bread

in the few sentences and your faith is nourished. So God makes His people know that every word that proceedeth out of His mouth makes them live. Sometimes - O, it is good to get this - sometimes you get it when you are in prayer, when the Lord helps you to pour out your heart before Him, when there is a certain energy, that at other times you have not, in pleading. Praying earnestly, seeking some particular guidance, or some particular strength, or some establishment, or some deliverance, your faith gets hold of it, and before the thing comes to pass you say it is coming. I bless the Lord, I know what it is, to believe a thing is to be done by God a good while before it has been done. When faith gets hold of God by His Word then it triumphs over unbelief, over the devil. We little know - not at all except by experience - what an enemy the devil is to the Lord Jesus and how, at every turn possible, everywhere permitted, he rages against Christ, against our souls. But when faith does get hold of a thing it cries, it shall be done. We say sometimes, it laughs at impossibilities and cries it shall be done. Now dear friends, how nourishing this is, that is to say, it brings God to you, brings omnipotence to you, and makes the word of Christ understood by you: "To him that believeth all things are possible". O, wait on Him; He is a good God. Wait on Him. I said last night, I am going to heaven; O, I did believe it and I was happy on my bed, and the Lord, by one word and another word coming into my mind - I am not saying with singular power, but with some efficacy - made me supremely happy, and I would not be young if I might. No, I live on the word of God as it drops in; I live on His gracious mercy, and I want you, under His kindness to do the same. Be afraid of losing your appetite; pray that your appetite may be keen; pray that you may say honestly: "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after Thee O God". One of the worst things that can befall this church would be the loss of desire or appetite for God. Be afraid of resting in your profession; be afraid of resting in the little you know; be afraid lest you should grow content with that. God keep you from contentment with anything short of Himself in your souls. "Thy raiment waxed not old". No, a type of that raiment that will never wear out. If you have that blessed righteousness, a raiment to cover you, you will never be unjust in God's sight and it will never wear out. O, justification, justification, justification, from all your guilt - not a little guilt - from all your guilt. I am often at one business, chiefly in

the night season, putting my sins before the Lord, reckoning what I remember of them. It is not an evil thing to be doing; so long as the Lord keeps it from being excessive, it is profitable. It has been excessive in me and I remember the Lord stopping me in it when He said, speak no more to Me of this. But as long as it is kept within bounds, confession is a blessing. Go on in it, because, as you are led that way, you will find this, it will be a near neighbour to forgiveness. O, forgiveness is close to confession. You have that in the 1st of John. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". Raiment, not wearing out. You may say to me, I am afraid my profession will wear out; I am afraid I shall be lost; I am so weak and so silly and so unbelieving, I am afraid I shall not hold out to the end. But God, having put on that robe, and you, having received it by faith and said, I put it on; Lord, I receive it; that will never leave you, and if righteousness never leaves you how can you come short? The feeling of being short is with you, the fear of coming short tries you, but coming short will never be your experience. You come short in all duties of life, in all the responsibilities of your profession, but grace abounds over the abounding of sin.

"Neither did thy foot swell these 40 years. You have been very tired; how tired I have been in my profession; how tired I have been sometimes in the ministry, seeing so little done, seeing so little fruit in you. How tired I have been sometimes, ready to give up. You do not know how I go home sometimes. I do not want to say the Lord does nothing, for I know He does a little, blessed be His Name. But though you get tired the foot of faith does not swell. Have you not sometimes, in a moment, found new courage to say, this is the way the Saviour trod:

His track I see and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view

So though there is much in self to discourage, there is everything in God to encourage. His Word, His love, His mercy, the mercy that endureth for ever. These, these are held before faith at times, so that the soul can say, I believe that it shall be even as it was told me. God told Paul; circumstances contradicted God apparently.

Waves said the ship must be broken, death must come. No, said Paul, the ship must be broken, but no life shall be lost. So faith honours God. Yes, in the face of guilt felt, faith honours God; in the face of discouragement, faith honours God by waiting on Him, waiting for Him, and so may the Lord help us to remember this. "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, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years."

AMEN.