

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 17 November 1918

EPHESIANS 2 v 14

"For He is our peace who hath made both one and
hath broken down the middle wall of partition
between us"

Ah, it is said in the book of Job that the heavens are not clean in God's sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water (Job 15 v 15). And can that great and glorious Being have the heart and love and mercy to speak peaceably to any sinner? to give peace to a creature who is unspeakably abominable and filthy? What we owe to whom such a mercy has come we shall never fully know; never fully thank God for. We do not deserve peace; this we acknowledge. A good many services of peace are being held today, and we will, God helping us, have a service of peace, and the peace shall be that of our text. 'Tis a great thing to thank God for, that peace has come to a world that for so many years has been torn and rent and desolated by war, and we do thank God for it. But there is a peace which is better, more enduring, more glorifying Him who is the Author of it; that peace which all who know what their sins are, know that they deserve not, and yet long for, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. In order to speak properly of this peace I must first of all speak of our war and quarrel with God. God forbid that any of you should ever think you have peace with God unless you first of all know what your bitter and ungrounded, wicked quarrel with Him is. We have deeply revolted, we have entered into a quarrel with God. The carnal mind is enmity with Him, it is not subject to Him, neither indeed can be. He is right; we are wrong. He is holy; we are unholy. He is just; we are all crooked and unjust. All the wrong is in us. All the right is in Him, and we have no heart to make matters up with Him, even if we had the right to approach Him. And we have no ground to stand upon; we have no reason to offer Him why He should allow us to come to Him. Our poverty is no reason why He should enrich us; our nakedness is no reason why He should clothe us, because our poverty and our nakedness are our sin, and our guilt. And will God look on

such? Will God take the first step in the matter of reconciliation? Will He let rebel man know that a design of peace toward him is in His heart? And will He send to rebel man One who shall make known His counsel and His design of peace? O, what love, what an infinite stoop this is; free grace must be exalted. The coming of the Son of God is marvellous in its love, in its condescension, and God therein shall shine and His people have the everlasting benefit. When God will bring a sinner to Himself, one of the first things He does is to show him that he is far off, that he is an alien, alienated from the life of God through ignorance and wicked works, and then it is that there is born in that sinner's heart a cry such as went out of the heart of the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner". This is our state; we are sinners; we are condemned; we are unjust; we are guilty. That is to say, we are dead. And if reconciliation to God is to take place, and this our guilt is to be removed, and we are to have peace with God, it must be on honourable grounds; it must be, that is to say, by the shedding of blood, for without shedding of blood there is no remission, and heaven will shine in all the splendour of love and goodness through the atonement of Christ, and sinners will shine in all the imputed beauty of Christ throughout eternity, through His atonement, and their souls will be filled with all the goodness of God through eternity through the blood of the everlasting covenant. And this is a matter that ought not to be lightly dealt with. The Lord help me to speak of it as I ought to speak, for I must speak of this Man, I must speak of what He did in order to bring peace to a guilty conscience and righteousness to an unjust person. "He is our peace". He, the Lord Jesus; is He nothing to us? He is much to the Father; He is much to the Holy Ghost. Is He nothing to us? Let us see first a little of this, what this Person is, for all depends on the Person. It has been well said, a mistake in the Person is a mistake in all things, and there is a mistake in the Person made by many. "Lo here is Christ; Lo there is Christ". The world resounds with such sounds. Who is this Person, this Person? Who is this Person? The only begotten Son of God made Man, in the fulness of time; Very God and Very Man; incarnate Deity. A real Man in whom the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells. Almighty God, a poor Man, One Person to be adored, worshipped, trusted, valued, obeyed. O, wondrous Person. We shall come to think it great if we fear Him to know Him. We shall come to think it wonderful to have Him in our hearts and we shall find it

wonderful if He is with us when we are in trouble and when we come to die. May it then be the object of our search day by day, crying out to the Lord God, that He would teach us to know His only begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, ignorance of Christ means death. The covenant runs thus, I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord. This is the He of the text; incarnate Deity, Emmanuel, the child born, the Son given, united there; One Person. Dear to the Father, pleasing the Father; the Father will have Him honoured. It is the will of the Father that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Well may you not be ignorant of Him. If you come to know Him you will feel that you are rich to all the intents of bliss, that you can want nothing, desire nothing, beside the true knowledge of Him. Second, what is He? Who is this wondrous Man, this true Almighty God? Well, for answer, sufficient full answer, you want to know the whole of the Scriptures; the fulness of Him, as to who He is and what. In a few words, I would say in answer to the question what is He, He is the Father's Elect, the Father's Servant, elected to do a great work, to raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen; to bring back the banished ones to their Father; to make an end of sin; to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in heaven or things in earth. He is the Father's Servant to do His heavenly bidding, and that heavenly bidding has, for its climax, this, that He should give up His life; God commanded His Son to die. "No man taketh my life from Me; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father". O solemn commandment, my brethren. See the devoted Saviour; He came from heaven, came with that mandate in His heart. The law of God He came to do. Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not; a body hast Thou prepared Me. Lo, I come to do Thy will O God. Thy law is within My heart. That was the end He had in view; that was the work He came to accomplish; to do His Father's bidding. How much this involved to Him, no tongue can fully tell. Shame and spitting and contempt, and particularly from men. His Name, His honour, everything dear to Him, men took from Him. "In His humiliation His judgement was taken from Him". But that which was the worst and painful and the most grievous, grieving thing to Him, was when His Father hid His face from Him; when justice came and exacted the utmost mite, when there was no abatement made at all; every jot and tittle of a broken law He fulfilled. He came to do the commandment of

His Father. Ah, if we had any knowledge of this at this moment working in our hearts, what gratitude, what humility, what amazement, what sanctification, what praise to the Most High God, it would call forth. Think of this; And did the darling Son of God deign to die? Did He pour out His soul unto death? Was He voluntarily numbered with the transgressors? Did He give His back to the smiters, His cheek to them that plucked off the hair? Did He offer Himself without spot unto God through the eternal Spirit? He was His Father's elect, His Father's servant, and this is expressed in different ways in the Scripture. John the Baptist said, when He had baptised Christ and the next day saw Him walking "Behold the Lamb of God" O, it was His delight to point to Christ. He said "He must increase I must decrease". He must be high and I will lift Him up. "Behold the Lamb of God". He is called the Paschal Lamb, the Passover, because the anger of God passed upon Him, and by that Israel passed out of bondage into liberty; out of death into life. He is said to be the sacrifice for us, for He poured out His soul unto death when justice came and demanded full payment. And when He had done all this, what was the effect? The effect was this, immediately, that as death passed away from Him He gave up the ghost and entered heaven and thereby He made a new and living way for His poor children unto the Father and into heaven. That was the effect. No sin was left, no deed to be done to merit God's favour, no act of obedience to be accomplished to fulfil what God has commanded in the law. No penal suffering to be inflicted upon any one of those for whom this vicarious work had been accomplished. "It is finished". Law, type, shadow, ceremony, commandment, sanction, curse, all fulfilled in the most absolute sense of the word and the effect was this, that God saw a church without spot or blemish or any such thing; sanctified through the offering of Jesus in the end of the world. Think of it, a church saved, a church sanctified, the sin of a land removed in one day. God saw nothing wrong, nothing faulty in that church, as thus viewed in the death of Jesus Christ. May we honour this blessed One; He is our peace. And if we see this by faith, we shall see that the proper and formal and only cause of any sinner ever having the peace of God in his conscience is the death of Jesus Christ. No tears, no repentance, no faith even - though faith is the instrument by which it comes - but the only sufficient, formal, proper cause, is the death of Jesus Christ. The very Person needed, came and did the work laid on Him,

fulfilled the commandment given to Him; then He entered into heaven. And that is our peace; He is our peace. This Lord alone is worthy to be exalted. O, the savour of His ointment, of His Name. O, the glory of His grace, the efficacy of His atonement, the sufficiency of His death. O the wonder of grace, as shining in this Man. And now, having so briefly and imperfectly stated that, and showed how God is infinitely satisfied and pleased with the work of His dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ, let me try to speak to you a few minutes of the coming of this peace; the effect of this, as it is with God, upon His poor children.

First of all God is at peace with them when they approach to Him and they find that He has no quarrel with them when they are praying. As their consciences torment them often, their reflections - and reflections are very painful - they are filled with confusion, also suffused with shame, burdened with a sense of guilt, troubled with indwelling sin, yet, as enabled to approach unto God, they find that there is no wrath coming out against them. The sceptre is held out to them, the throne is open to them, the Spirit helps their infirmities and they find access, as it is said in the preceding verse, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ". And, to speak to some who know it, is it not in your judgment, one of the sweetest and highest privileges that God the Father bestows upon you? that God, the Holy Ghost works in you, namely to give you access by the blood of Christ in the Person of Christ, where you may pour out your troubles, express your wishes, make known your wants, lay out before the Lord your case. O wonder of wonders that the God of peace should let His enemies come near to Him; give them grace to bend before Him in humble submission and ask that they may be reconciled and forgiven, pardoned and justified; sanctified and made meet for the Master's use. O, if we had but faith to believe it we should rejoice at every time we got access afresh, access to the throne of God's heavenly grace - for that is through the atoning work of Christ - and that God allows us, and more, that He enables us, to come before Him and pour out our hearts and make known to Him that we want to be right with Him, want to be saved in His way, want to be sanctified, want to have our iniquities subdued, want to walk in the way of peace and truth, want to know Jesus Christ, want to have His glory impressed upon these, our

hearts. O, it is a great thing that the God of peace should say to His enemies, come near to Me; say it to them in their own hearts by His blessed Spirit, and that their faith should get a glimpse of Him who is their peace. O that ever God should have allowed any of us to look on Jesus Christ. O that He should ever have given us an eye to look on Him and then give us to have that wonderful sight; this is what He does. This Man shall be our peace. This very Man, this very God, this dear Redeemer, He who made the atonement, He shall be and He is our peace. No tongue can express what the heart feels when it gets near to God. What liberty, what deliverance, what light and life, are felt; what blessed hopes rise, what warm affections move the spirit, what humility takes possession of the mind when you are favoured to feel that the Lord has set before you an open door and no man can shut it, no devil can shut it, no unbelief can shut it. No, all hardness and all causes of separation are done away in the soul's experience, when that open door is set before faith, and faith goes right through and into the presence of God. For He is our peace. And let me pursue this a little further as to experience. There is this wonder that the vilest, blackest sinner out of hell who is brought thus to the presence of God in Jesus Christ becomes as a lion in his petitions, and can, and does urge on God's notice a reason why such a poor sinner should be saved and blessed. His confessions are many; O, he does not know how to get low enough; he does not know how to magnify, in his confusion, his sins sufficiently. What an evil creature he is, what a rebellious person he is, and if a child of God, that he has given the Father more trouble than any other child in the family. And yet he says again and again in faith, do this, do this for Thy Name's sake. Yea, and, as the church of old said, "Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory." God always gives faith to believe what He says to His children sooner or later. Now they can do what He tells them. He tells them to command Him - "Concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me" - and I know in a small measure that it is one of the most amazing parts of a Christian's experience that he should be so bold before the Almighty, while, at the same moment he is full of reverence, as to tell the Lord he must have this; he, the sinner must have this. Yea, and to say to the Lord, He must do it. This is purely through the atonement; that gives him boldness. He is so vile in himself, the sinner says how can I dare to open my mouth before the Lord, and yet he is so blessed at times with faith in the infinite

value of the atonement of Christ, that it comes to that, he can ask the Lord, believing that the things he asks he has. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it" And the Lord is not displeased with him; the Lord is not displeased with a sinner for this, his boldness. Now peace, real peace in the conscience, is effected with Christ's death in that conscience made known, and it is a peace with God. That is the first thing, a solid, real peace with God. Men know the greatness of this who have felt their quarrel with God. Ah you may have felt you could understand Erskine's word when he said he was a devil, so wicked you may feel in your nature, and so wicked in your life in your thoughts, your inward life, and yet for all that there comes power into your soul, that wondrous peace, that you cannot doubt it is God's peace. It removes all the distance, and all the quarrel and all the rebellion, and all the guilt, and all the pollution, as to the condemnation thereof. It removes all from your soul and you have peace with God and can say, with one, "I lay me down and sweetly sleep, for I have peace with God". Nothing wanted, the satisfaction is so wonderful and so great, so prevailing in the heart that there is nothing asked for beside. This Man shall be our peace. And O it is an amazing peace. The man who has it does not wonder that the Scriptures call it the peace of God which passeth all understanding. You cannot understand it, it is so penetrating, so all pervading, and so powerful. When rain falls from heaven copiously it gets to the roots of things. Sometimes there is hardly enough to settle the dust; sometimes it is so copious that it goes right down to the roots of things. Some operations of the mercy of God are gentle, and they just allay the mind and the dust and confusion in the soul, but sometimes it is different in measure, not in nature; it comes flowing in and pouring in so as that it gets to the heart, conscience, will and affections, and the sinner is filled with that peace which passeth all understanding. He cannot understand why God should give it to him; he cannot understand it. Why me, and pass by others? O why me, blessed God, why me? Why such a wretch as me? It fills him with amazement that he, of all creatures, that he, in his family, he in his workshop, that he is singled out to be blessed like this. Why me, Lord? Why such a wretch, the most unlikely, the most unworthy? But there it is. That scripture is brought to pass "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy". And it is so powerful you cannot resist it. One said, and we understand it,

some of us, My soul refused to be comforted. Nobody could comfort me, no friends, no arguments, nothing could move me away from my disconsolate condition. O but though you may have said that, though you may have felt with Job that if He spake to you, you would not believe Him, yet when He does speak, not in thunder, not in lightning, and not in a whirlwind, but with the still small voice of the gospel of the Holy Ghost brought to you, then you wrap your mantle about your face; you begin to worship love divine, begin to be devout, begin to feel that your heart opens; the two leaved gates of your heart fly open, and you can say to Him, your beloved. Come in, come in Thou much loved Guest and abide with me. This passeth all understanding. O, this gets to the Lord a great Name in the sinner's affections. This fills the sinner with an amazing satisfaction. Peace, as I have often said, peace has satisfaction in it, real satisfaction. Now you know, who have had any experience of this natural life, that there is not a thing you have, not a thing you have enjoyed in this natural life, of which you could say and can say that it has full, unalloyed satisfaction in it; not a thing. But there is this which is beyond all; it transcends all. When the peace of God comes you are so satisfied that you want nothing else, nothing; nobody else, nothing else. I am rich to all the intents of bliss. And He is our peace. Your eye wont be off Christ then; O no, you wont be gadding about for another object then. He, and He alone is the peace of your soul; the reason why God should bless you; the reason why your conscience should be purged and your heart softened, and your mind satisfied, and you accepted of God, accepted in the Beloved. He is our peace; bless God for Jesus Christ; O, bless God for Jesus Christ, and bless God for making known Jesus Christ to us, any of us. It is so amazing. Peace in this world, peace with providence always follows. I will tell you it again, that when you have peace in your conscience with God you have peace with His providence. There is nothing you would alter. Submission to His holy will fills you. People are very rich with this. Paul says, all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life or death; all things are yours. Troubles are your servants; afflictions are yours to do you good. Rods and losses and crosses, these are all yours; your servants; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. That is the termination; beyond that there is nothing, and beyond that you do not want to go. God, All in all. O, that we may live to find this. And there will be peace with death,

that is to say, there will be no wish to avoid it. We all want to avoid that naturally; it is so dreadful, so repugnant a thing to our nature, that we want to avoid it, put off the evil day as long as possible, but not the saint when he has this peace of God which passeth all understanding. Ah, he would welcome the hour of his dissolution and say, come Lord Jesus, quickly come. As one said, whose name we all are acquainted with - I often think of it; I mean Philpot - when on his death bed; he said "Beautiful beautiful, better to die than to live." And that must be so to all in whom this peace of God reigns. He is our peace; Jesus Christ is our peace. And in conclusion I would say, there is a peace coming to the earth, a blessed peace when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. What a day that will be. But may this inward peace be felt by us. The Lord grant it for His Name's sake.

AMEN.