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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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EXODUS 33 v 16

"For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth"

Israel, at this time, was in an exceedingly serious, solemn position, sad in the extreme, for they had recently discovered the idolatry of their nature, and their readiness to forget God; their ingratitude, their forgetfulness of Moses, the instrument of God to bring them out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea. They had discovered also their impatience. They knew not that Moses was with God, receiving instructions, and mercies, and Covenant promises, and law to regulate their life. We soon forget Him. It is a charge that no child of God will ever repel when brought to him, that he soon forgot God's works. O, the shame of it; the weight of guilt; the burden of it, when felt under the convincing teaching of the Spirit. That God who has been so gracious, so kind, so merciful, so wonderful in working in us, and for us. That a few days, as it were, of absence, an adverse providence, a temptation of the devil, and away our vile nature flies from Him; forgets His goodness, frets against present things, and wishes itself back in Egypt. Have not you sympathised - you who know something of this - with Ezra in his confession? I, said he, to God - "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee". Deeply do I sympathise with him. More reason I have than any of you, but I am sure you also must have some reason to blush and be ashamed of your treatment of your best friend, your treatment of Him who is, happily, full of compassion, and ready to forgive, and has many a time forgiven, and remembered that you were dust. And the people, in this sad case, had to put off their ornaments. Not a pleasant thing to have to put yourself off; the trappings of religion, the outsides of religion, all put off in a sense. Naked you have to be before God. What a state. In this case He said - "That I may know what to do unto

thee". And if the Lord speaks thus threateningly to you in a dispensation, you will wonder. That adversity will be a sword, to your judgement; that trouble will be a manifestation of divine anger, in your feeling; and your sin will stand before you. What is the Lord about to do? Conscience says, You deserve the worst, and you reply, True, I do. Memory brings up quantities of things before you that have been wrong in you, and you own the indictment, and then you have to come with the publican, a man who suits people even to the end of their pilgrimage, occasionally; have to come to his case; say - "God be merciful to me a sinner". Sin is a shame. It is a shame to any people. It is a shame to a child of God. Difficult it is for him sometimes to lift up his face to God. You understand me, I know; it is difficult. People talk about it being easy to pray, and they are always ready to pray, because there is no hindrance, no sense of sin. But when sin is in your memory, and guilt on your conscience, and you go back to certain things - perhaps 20 or more years ago - in which you found yourselves indulging, O what can you say? Let me again mention Ezra - O how deeply I sympathise with his words. There are two things, let me here say, that very greatly humble God's people. One is a sight and sense of what they are, and of what they do, as the people of God. You wont strut about as if you were somebody if you get given to you by the Holy Spirit a sight, and sense, of what sin is, of what it is in the sight of God. An evil thought, a covetous wish, an unlawful look, O the guilt of it, the weight of it, the burden of it. Why, you feel, perhaps you have felt, not fit for the company of God's people. How then can you approach Jehovah? And the other humbling thing is forgiveness. You get into the dust when you are convinced of your unprofitableness, and sinfulness, and sins, but O you do get into a place that is not a filthy dust, but a lowness in your own mind, a littleness in your own eyes, filled with wonder that God has borne with you, and with still greater wonder that He has many a time forgiven you your iniquities. And now Moses, the friend, the mediator of this Nation, stands in the breach, has God's promise to go with him; that is to say, God would send an angel with him. And it appears that Moses, at the moment, had no full realisation of what angel it was that God would send with him; whether the Angel of the Covenant, or a created angel. "Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me" (verse 12) though the Lord had said He would send His Angel, the Angel of the Covenant. But we do need, all of us, to be

taught again and again. Every point that will glorify God in experience must be more or less distinctly opened to us by the Spirit. And so, not fully realising who was to go with him, Moses said, Let Thy presence go with me, and then God told him He would - "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest". And this brought out the text - "And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". We have here, not a loud profession made by people reproved by Jeremiah - They say, temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are we. (Jeremiah 7 v 4). But this was not, at this moment, with this people. Moses said there is only one thing that would convince, that would do the turn for us, and that is Thy presence. That is what every living soul craves; what every gospel church desires, the presence of God. Are there distinct signs of that given us in holy Scripture? Is there anything by which we may know that the Lord is with us individually, and as a people? There is one great rule for us to go by in all things, and that is infallible Scripture. Does this Book tell us of the presence of God with His people? The answer is, Yes. That presence is spoken of by the Apostle Paul in the Corinthians - "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face, or person, of Jesus Christ", the Angel of the Covenant. (2 Corinthians 4 v 6). We could not bear God out of Christ. O, we need to be kept from an absolute God. "No man can see Me and live". His majesty must be veiled, and He veiled it in infinite condescension in the Person of His Son incarnate. - "Hathspoken unto us by His Son", (Hebrews 1 v 2) and is with His people in His Son. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world". How shall we know this presence? We shall know this presence by having Him in our hearts. We shall know His presence by the Holy Ghost being in us. We shall know His presence by the Father receiving us, and walking with us; receiving us as His sons and daughters. Can we bear that standard, that test? Now take this first, because, though the Third Person in the Trinity, infinitely glorious, and equal with the Father, and the Son, His presence gives knowledge of the presence of Christ, and of the presence of the Father. So take this first, the

Spirit of God. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3 v 16). It is a difficult standard, and extremely difficult for me to speak of it, having so little of Him in my own heart. But here it is; may we come honestly to the standard, the Holy Ghost in you. "Know ye not?" Do you know Him? How shall we know Him? By conviction. One might say that vital religion from the beginning to the end of it, is conviction. Conviction of sin - we know it if we are rightly convinced. Conviction of the Person of Christ - "We know that the Son of God is come". Conviction of the vicariousness of His death. Conviction of His resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Conviction of the reality, and the weight, and the beauty, and the truth, and the glory of the Scriptures. Conviction, teaching, demonstration. Demonstration - just as a lecturer in anatomy demonstrates to his students every joint, every bone, and every ligament of the body, so the Holy Ghost comes and convinces a sinner that he is a sinner, and very solemn it is to have sin set before you in the light of God's countenance; to be made to possess the iniquities of your youth; to have your sins sewn up in a bag and given to you to carry. Is that a sign of His presence? It will be proved to you eventually if you have got it. Who opened your eyes? Who told you you were naked? Who made you conscious of your breach in the law? of your rebellion against God? Wherein shall it be known that I am a Christian man if I have no hatred of sin? Wherein shall it be known that I have anything right in my heart and conscience toward, and before, God, if I do not know what it is to be a fallen sinner? The indwelling of the Spirit is known by the motions of faith. "All men have not faith". Some in this chapel have; God has given it to us, and that faith has made us tremble at His presence, at His word, at His judgements. Tremble before His divine nature, the eternal purity of His nature, the infinite justice of His nature, the omnipotence of His nature. He is God. Faith has told us that; told our hearts, pressed it into our consciences as the instrument in the hand of the Spirit. If you have faith, you will believe many wonderful things. Sad things about yourselves, and blessed things about God. You will believe in the Throne of Grace, and that that Throne was erected eternally in the purpose of God, and actually in the Person of Jesus Christ when He became a Man here; the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man; in whom poor sinners must worship. Ah, faith

will point out this to you sometimes, and say in your heart, Do not despair because you are a sinner. Grace is more than sin, the death of Christ is more than your death in sin. The righteousness of Christ is more than your unrighteousness. If you have God with you, faith will say, you have got a deep-seated disease, but there is balm in Gilead, there is a Good Physician, go to Him for the balm, and expose your disease to His gaze. And if the Spirit of God is with you, there will be moments when prayer will be no effort, but it will be springing up naturally by the Spirit's grace in you, and you would find it, if you tried, even difficult to leave off. O prayer is wonderful. A bad case is laid before God by prayer. Sincere desires are expressed to Him by prayer. Love to Him is expressed by prayer. Grace goes out of your hearts and lips and eyes when the Spirit of grace and supplications is working in you. God is with men who pray. He teaches them how to pray. He opens His ears as they pray. He bends His ears and in answer to prayer He plucks His hand out of His bosom, even His right hand, and comes to save the praying ones. And if the Holy Ghost is with you, you will, from time to time, close in with Christ by saving faith and find God your Friend for ever. There is such an experience in the people of God as that. Jesus comes near enough in the light, revealing light of the Spirit, for the little arms - to quote Flavel - for the little arms of your faith to open to receive and embrace Him, and this is closing in with Him. His terms are acceptable to faith. Nothing in your hand; nothing good in your nature; but a naked soul, by living faith, coming to Him, and He, in His infinite love coming to that soul, and that soul in its faith receiving and embracing Him. God is with a man when the match is made between him and the Lord Jesus. O, I wish matches were often made here between you and Christ. The distance between Him and us is very great, and very serious, at times. Does He come near? He visits sinners still. Does He come near to you? Does He ever come to you in the night watches? Does the Spirit open your eyes to see Him? Do you see Him to be fairer than the children of men? perceive that grace is poured into His lips? Do you see Him as your righteousness? Do you see His precious fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, all causes of separation? He is with sinners. They get this gospel from time to time in their hearts, because the Holy Ghost is in them doing that which the Lord Jesus promised He should do - "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". Nobody knows

but the people who get it, what it is to have a supernatural view of the Lord Jesus; when the gospel which, in the blessed letter of it, is proclaimed from Genesis to Revelation, comes with some degree of life, light, and power. When the Holy Spirit opens it, and sets before the sinner the Lord Jesus; just as the Apostle to the Galatians expresses it - "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you". O, my brethren, it is a wonderful religion, a great religion, in a great sinner. It is the abounding of grace over the abundance of sin. It is the coming in of the law of life to swallow up the death of the sinner. It is the bringing near of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus to justify, and beautify, the ungodly. Is He with us? You know I have serious views of the present state of things in the Church of God, and in the nation, and I know the Lord is not with His people today as He used to be, even in my own time. I have known better days than the present day, and a ministry that had life, and power in it, and God has taken nearly all those ministers away. But, notwithstanding, there is still an indwelling Spirit who will never leave the Church wholly. And He does give tokens, He does teach, He does guide, and He does reveal the Saviour. O, blessed revelation. Now dear friends, look then at this, wherein shall it be known that we are the people of God, and that we have found grace in His sight, but by the presence, the indwelling of the Spirit; by the coming of the Lord Jesus to a sinner? I wish I knew how to express it properly, and adequately. There is such a wonder, such a glory in it, that one's own tongue is quite inadequate to a proper expression of it - the presence of Christ in, and with, a sinner.

Then the presence of the Father. We must have the Trinity if we have salvation; each Person is equally interested, and engaged in it. O, salvation belongs to, and comes from, the Trinity. One has well said, Salvation belongs to the Personalities in the Trinity; built on the Personalities of the Trinity. So the Father, He has His share, His place, and this is it - I will walk in you; I will walk with you; I will receive you as My sons and daughters. O, what a case. Now if you come to it, you will have to say, that is some of you, that this great God has received you. He has not frowned you from the Throne of Grace has He? He has not repelled your humble petitions, and said, I will take no notice of you. You have expected Him to do so, you feared

He would do it, you have deserved that He should do it, but He has not done it. No, He has drawn you to Himself through Jesus Christ. Access to God is beautifully expressed by the Apostle Paul - "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ". "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father", and the Father's smile is like the summer sun. The iceberg you have felt in your heart is melted; the stone that you have felt just became like wax; in a minute it is done when God receives you. No effort of your own, but just the effect of His love, and of His gracious reception of you. No frown clouds His face. It is an amazement - I understand a little of it - an amazement to one who goes burdened with his sins, and sinfulness, to find that God does not take notice of those things that he, the sinner, is mourning, but just puts them all away. I will forgive your sin, and remember your iniquity no more. And this has been the sweetest experience of some of us. O happy sinner, with whom God is.

Now He is with us, if we belong to Him, in another way, namely in His providence. Providence is a great deal more solemn than we are apt to think of it. Circumstances are exceedingly weighty though they may be very trifling to us sometimes, but to see providence as the handmaid of God, to see it as the fulfilling of divine purposes, to see it as connected with His great decree to save a sinner, makes it very serious, and solemn, and weighty. You will ponder well the path of your feet when you see providence as you should see it, in the light of God, in the light of His Word. Something comes to your family. To most people it would be a trifling thing, but to you it may be the voice, and the hand of God, and that will make you tread very cautiously, very prayerfully. It may be a chastening. Some would say, if they knew your feeling, and your fear, and your sinking, Well, that is a poor, mean spirit you have got, but faith says, I want to hear God's voice in it, and to profit by it. "My son" - says the Word of God in it - "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." An opened ear will wish to hear the voice of God in providence. Is He with you? Circumstances in themselves may not seem to distinguish you from another person who may have exactly the same kind of thing in providence. That that will distinguish you as a child of God will be the exercises of your soul with respect to the circumstances, with respect to God in them. Is He

in them to you? A man has trouble, and his neighbour has the same kind of trouble, and the man says, Well - he begins to philosophise - well other people have trouble, and why should not I have? and lifts his head up. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity" The other says, O what is God about to do with me? What is this come for? What is its voice? and he wishes for a chastened spirit, an opened ear, an obedient heart, and a tender conscience in the matter. Is God with us? Do you find exercises about providence? I have often - I think I may say often - mentioned to you what James Bourne said in one of his letters - If I were charged with robbing the Royal Mail, I should say, O Lord, what is coming? I have understood that in my own soul many, and many a time - O Lord, what is coming? What does this mean? And perhaps the Lord may say, You went astray from Me; you got independent of Me; you became carnally minded, you rested in that circumstance because it was pleasant to you; you fretted when I took away something; and this rod is to remind you, this providence is to call you back. It may be stocks to put your wandering feet in, a rod to lay on your foolish back, a voice to give you wisdom. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise" (Proverbs 15 v 31) I was a young man when God made that over to me, and it did me good. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise". Did you ever hear the reproof of life? Then God was with you. "Wherein shall it be known". Then He is known in providence by the deliverances which He works, the supplies He sends, friends He raises up, and the gracious teaching He vouchsafes to a sinner - "Great deliverance giveth he to his king" (Psalm 18 v 50). He commandeth deliverances for Jacob. He does not leave him. Jacob goes from his father's house, but God goes to him in the wilderness, and then goes with him all through the twenty years of trouble. He works deliverances. O, how many, many times have the Lord's people had the sacred pleasure, so to put it, of sitting down to see how He worked in many, and many a gracious way. He finds out knowledge of witty inventions, knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation; how to send supplies where none appear possible. We are very apt to straiten the Lord. Our horizon is so near to ourselves. Then we think that He is just as we are, limited. "They limited the Holy One of Israel". Some of us have often done that. But God does work deliverances. He may deliver you out of a trouble while you have got the trouble remaining with you. "I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered

me from all my fears". And that was in the same Psalm with that which occurs a little later - "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles". (Psalm 34). You may get deliverance before you get out of your trouble, and then the trouble is not half the trouble it was before. He can give submission to His will in affliction, and that is a deliverance. Rebellion makes a trouble ten times a trouble. Submission makes it a sweet thing, bearable at any rate, drinkable. When you can say - "The will of the Lord be done" - God is with you. God is with a man who can lie flat before His divine Majesty; with a man whose will is taken hold of by the Spirit of God and put straight with God's will. Not broken to shivers, but just put straight with God's will, so that the man says, honestly, humbly - "Thy will be done". Great deliverance God gives when He works submission. This then is just a word about the presence of God. You must enlarge for yourselves, and you will, as the Lord is with you.

Now look at the effect of this. "So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all people that are upon the face of the earth". This will make you men wondered at. Narrow-minded, self-righteous, separated from all the people! Let me put all the people into three classes. First the Papists, and with them I number the Anglo Catholics, from the Archbishops down to the Curate who has that character, and you will be separated from the Papists. You only need one Mediator, and only wish for one, and look to one, and hang about one, and take your case to one. One Mediator. O, the grievous, terrible insult that the Papist gives to the Lord Jesus when he sets Mary above Him, and makes her petition necessary to propitiate her son. And the second class is the Modernist who does not believe in the Scripture, does not believe in God - he may say he does - does not believe in the history of the Scripture, nor the mystery of the Scripture, nor the truth of the Scripture, nor the God of the Scripture, and you have to be separated from him. And the third class is the profane class. Profanity, a terrible thing; profaning the Name of God, profaning the day of God, profaning every sacred thing existing; very terrible. All these you have to be separated from. You shall be separated from all people. Separated in our views of things; our views of God. A man's character, as a Christian, is marked by his views, Spirit given views, of God. Holy, holy, holy -

and ever, more and more, as the Spirit is in, and teaching him - is his solemn feeling. May the Lord grant that we may not have a flippant religion; a religion with weight in it. The weight of God's Being as occasionally we get an apprehension given to us of that. The weight of Christ's Person. O, what a solemn, wondrous, glorious Person, is Jesus Christ, a complex Person. And our views of the Spirit. He is as necessary to salvation as are the Father, and the Son. The Trinity is united - as in their Being, so in their Covenant relationship, in salvation. Are these your views? Is God a Being, a real Being to you? Have you ever felt the weight of truth in the very Name of God? of Jehovah? Been afraid to move lest your beloved should go? Afraid to think a thought that would burden your conscience with guilt. Afraid to trifle with the Name of God. Separated then you are from all the people that dwell upon the earth. And separated in your knowledge of sin. It is an awful thing to be a sinner. I was convinced of sin in youth, but I did not know sin as I know it now. An awful thing to be a sinner. Sin, like a strong spring in your nature, sending up again, and again, here and there, and all over you, injecting such streams as that you are like one drenched. And this is not a general knowledge; it is given. It is painful, it is a shame to the man, to be a sinner in the sight of God. And your views of what it will be to be saved, and get to heaven. Saved from the hell of sin in your nature, and from the just anger of God whom you have offended, and saved from that condemnation that is expressed in the Scripture - "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". Right views of sin should be prized, and I doubt not are prized by them who have them wrought in them by the Spirit of God. And right views of the Scripture; that it is not a Book to edit, and to cut, and to do as you will with, but a blessed Book from the very mouth of God, containing truth to be received, and revered, and held. O, what a mercy it is to know the Bible as having been given by inspiration of God. And right views of life; that for every idle word, and every wrong deed, and every ungodly thing done, a man out of Christ must give an account; and the people of God see this. Right views of worship; what it is to worship, and all the sensuousness of worship taken away, and there is just a sinner, and God, and God speaks, and the sinner hears; and God touches, and the sinner melts; and God smiles, and the sinner is happy; and the blood of Jesus is applied, and sin is washed away; and that is worship.

What goes on between God and your soul; that is worship. Separated, separated, and so separated as to all practices. All practices. We need it. If we were not likely to lie; if we were not likely to unrighteously quarrel; if we were not likely to turn aside to any kind of evil; would the Scriptures warn us against such, and such things? Then we need the clean fear of God. We need to be separated from a proud spirit. O, the beauty of humility. I wish I were clothed with it every day of my life. Humility is a wonderful blessing; to be clothed with humility. If you walk in pride God will resist you. "He resisteth the proud". But if you are humble, He will acknowledge you, and give you grace. I believe men are very happy when they are truly humbled, because then they are humble. But mind, you must first be humbled before you can be humble. Who can humble us? God. Nobody else can. Look at your proud nature, see the independence of it, and then see who can take this terrible spirit away and break the neck of it; and you say, Only God can do it. "So shall we be separated" from all error, error of doctrine; from error of experience; from error of practice. We shall be separated from all people on the face of the earth if the Lord is with us.

Now brethren, do you seek Him? Do you seek Him in your souls, to have Him there? and do you seek Him here, that He would be with us? Think of His walking in the midst of the candlesticks. Have you any evidence of Him walking in the midst of your hearts, and in the midst of the church? May the Lord help us to look seriously at this great matter. I have just brought it to your notice. He can enlarge upon it. He can make it serious to you, and solemn. May He do so, so that we, as a people, may seek His presence. "If Thy presence go not with me"; if Thy presence be not with me in trouble; if it be not with me to save me from inborn sin; if it be not with me to keep me from the power of the devil, and his temptations; if it be not with me on a dying bed; if it be not with me passing the river of death; what will become of me?

AMEN.