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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 31 October 1926

Ezekiel 3 v 12 (last clause)

Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place

The circumstances of this beautiful word are very gloomy; Israel was in captivity, Jerusalem is desolate, her princes and her young men are carried away and she hath given all her pleasant things for meat for her soul. She remembered, in the days of her affliction and her misery, all her pleasant things, things which she had enjoyed, mercies which had been her lot, but for the multitude of her transgressions she was carried away to Babylon, and for 70 years suffered the anger of God, suffered that just, and frequently threatened punishment if they continued in their transgressions they should find that God would cast them out of His presence. He took His glory away from them; He left His house desolate. The ways of Zion mourn; none come to her solemn feasts. Whenever God visits Zion for her sins she becomes desolate. The absence of power, the withholding of gracious operations, the consequent leanness of soul, the prevalence of sin, the hardening of the heart, the seeing of gods made of wood and stone and so on; these things always follow persistent sin in the saints in the Church of God. No child of God can sin without suffering; no church can turn aside from God without knowing that He is displeased, and turning aside from her. Matters in the Scriptures set this forth; the history of the saints of the Most High, of the national church, will tell this wonderfully grievous story and present experience, and some here may say the same thing. With the wicked, God will have one awful day of reckoning - may not that day come to you who are now careless - but with the saints He has many days of reckoning, many, many methods of punishing His saints for their sins. They are to have no reckonings after death so they have them all in this life. No frowns in eternity will darken their sky; therefore, all the frowns they experience are to be here known and felt. Chastening after chastening comes in this world, and it were wise in us if, when we are dark and distant from God, and He does not hear prayer, does not send answers, to consider well why. Is

there not a cause? If any of you are in darkness and bondage, ask yourselves, is there not a cause? He is full of goodness, there is no straitness in Him, but the sins that His people indulge do bring about solemn changes in His dealings with them. He hides His face, He sends ministers to reprove them, and they say to them in their ministry, O do not these things, and if they persist in doing them then the rod follows. We see the kindness and love of Christ in those seven letters which He sent to the seven Churches in Asia and they all say, sin is not cheap and that the very least of all the reasons is very bitter. They all say that Christ's love will not brook the evil state that His people get into. They say His eye searches through and through; they say that He marks the sins of His people. May we then take notice of how we are in secret and what God says to us if He speaks, and what His manner to us is, so that we may not go on hardening our hearts as in the day of provocation. O my fellow Christians do be careful about your inward walk as well as your external conduct. Depend upon it if you walk carelessly, if you in any way despise the goodness of God, if any way you trample on conscience, if in any way you go against either doctrine or experience or practices which the Scripture sets forth, then look out for some holy, solemn manifestation of God's displeasure. Not for the curse of the law, but for the discipline of the gospel by the Spirit in you, and it may be in some way in divine providence also He will manifest His displeasure. Now the prophet Ezekiel, who was a priest, was called by God to be a watchman and sit on the walls and it was not an easy thing for him to do that which God sent him to do, because the people were particularly hardened. Said the Lord, if I sent you to a people of strange speech and of a hard language, they would hear thee, but these, My people, are of a hard heart and I send you to speak to them about their state, and the prophet would seem to have been exceedingly troubled about the message he was to deliver, because the word which God had given him to eat was in his mouth as honey for sweetness but when it came to speaking, to opening his mouth, then it was very bitter, and he said, when the Spirit came to him, then he went in the bitterness of his spirit. In the midst of this trouble, this darkness, this obduracy and obstinate spirit of the people, the prophet heard a voice, a voice of a great rushing, a commotion, a powerful voice speaking to him. God does speak to prophets, He does speak to people, albeit the prophets or the people

may hear nothing, but somebody will hear and it will be a voice as of a great rushing, with authority, and making a commotion in the mind by what is said, and this was what the prophet heard "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place". This striking word, this wondrous light in the midst of darkness, this glory of God appearing where judgment was reigning, may He help us to regard, and give me, if it please Him, grace to speak of it to you. God had a place, He had a place, for a long, long time in Israel; He put His name in Jerusalem; He put His Name in Jerusalem in the temple which Solomon built. That was, so to speak, His locality. His Being is not local - Do not I fill heaven and earth - but He does abide in certain places where He puts His Name. Now He abides in people, individual persons; His place is there. Of Zion He says, here will I rest. This is the place of my rest where I will dwell for I have desired it. But first of all I would speak a little, and it can only be very little, of that eternal place, so to speak, in which God dwells. We can never enter into it; the church will never enter into His essential place, for, as the Spirit of God moved Paul to write: "He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto". He is God, whom no man hath seen nor can see. And, says Paul, "To Him be glory for ever and ever". There is no doubt on my mind that the more the Holy Ghost leads a saint into a knowledge, a contemplation of the essential Being and incommunicable glory of God, the more sober and humble and reverent that saint is. I have often admired that fine word of Dr Watts - "Thou art the ever living God were all the nations dead". May the Lord lead us into some true apprehension of what He is - Eternal, the Eternal God. And the glory of this blessed one in this respect is incommunicable; He can never be robbed of it. Robbing God is spoken with respect to men in their worship, but this glorious Being, dwelling in unapproachable light, every saint must, more or less distinctly, at some time enter into a contemplation and experience of, and so will say "Unto Him be glory for ever and ever". If this divine Being had been pleased to determine not to create a world, not to have an angel nor a creature in the whole universe, He would have been as He is today and always - sufficient for Himself. It is no empty speculation to one who is led into it, to think about the Eternal God subsisting in Three Persons and these Three Persons, co-equal - Father essentially so, Son essentially so, Holy Ghost essentially so - these Three Persons hold communion with each other; each sufficient, each rejoicing in the

other. I think at times my soul has, for a few moments, now and again, felt to believe this, to adore this blessed God. If ever you see Him in this way, you will love Him for Himself. You believe in Him so as to love His glory, and sing with the mighty, rushing wind of the voice: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord". The Psalmist appears to have done so when He said: Blessed art Thou O Lord. Blessed in Thy Being, blessed in Thy eternity, blessed in Thy justice, blessed in all that goodness of Thy nature, in all the infinite wisdom of Thy nature, in Thy omnipotence, in Thy beauty, in Thy self-sufficiency, in Thy eternity and in Thy mutual communion. Blessed art Thou O Lord. We are creatures of a day, not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. He is sufficient for all. But it pleased this divine Being, the Eternal God, to decree to create a world and men and angels, that His glory, insofar as He would communicate it, should be seen by them and that, though sufficient in Himself, He would be made glad by the adoration of creatures, the willing obedience of subjects, by the love of children, His own children. Hence, heaven and earth, angels elect and fallen, men elect and reprobate. What a mighty theme, and this is to be said with respect to it: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord." He has made visible in the work of creation His eternal power and Godhead. Nature is a teacher, a teacher of God. It is the infidelity of man that turns nature against himself. Nature is a teacher. When you look on nature may your eyes be open to see Him who made it, to see, as Paul expresses it in the Romans, His eternal power and Godhead. There, blessed be His glory. There His independence is declared; there the dependence of all creation on Him is declared and there He will be honoured and glorified doubtless through eternity. That is His place; Do not I fill heaven and earth?

There is another place in which His glory is and that is His own bosom and I understand that that is spoken relatively. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. If you say, whence came Jesus Christ? the answer is, from His Father's bosom. There He dwelt and there, as you have it in the 8 of Proverbs, He rejoiced before His Father and in the habitable parts of the earth with the children of men. O what a place, the Son of God in the bosom of His Father and in that place these things were done. "Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, to the praise of the glory of His grace". My brethren, you who know the Lord, or rather are known of Him, when your faith is, as it were, taken by the hand by the Holy Spirit, and led upward into heavenly places in Christ, there you will see, and there you will hear, what was done in eternity. "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place" where His sovereign love, where His grace, where His goodness, and where all that the saints are to know in time and through eternity of divine redemption, there all these things were settled upon, decreed and fixed and bestowed. O what a glorious place; O, what transactions were there. To think - as some of us at times have been made comfortable to think - that there God thought on us, God thought about us, and determined that the riches of His grace should be poured into our souls as precious treasure given into vessels to retain. There redemption's scheme was fixed upon, and there the Holy Ghost was promised to the Son who was to become incarnate and through and from Him that Spirit was to come down into every redeemed soul, and quicken it into eternal life. Can we say, have we said - may the Lord help us to answer if we have said respecting this place - Thanks be to God for what He there did? Thanks be to His grace given to such unworthy sinners; thanks be to His love fixing itself on the most unlovely objects. Thanks be to His decision that the ungodly should be justified and the impure sanctified and the lost saved and the hell deserving sinner have heaven given to him. Blessed be the glory of the Lord from this place. And it descends from this place and irradiates the whole of Zion. When she is under a cloud, when she is distant, when she is in captivity, the glory comes from this place to her, reviving, saying "Arise, shine for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee". So it comes to sinners, comes from heaven, comes from the eternal purpose of God, breaking out in the most wonderful ways of light, of conviction, of mercy, of pardon, and of goodness; it comes from heaven; that is the place.

Now there is another place for me to mention, where the Holy Son of God became incarnate, where God came down from heaven and partook

of flesh and blood which was begotten of the Holy Ghost. My brethren, all that God will ever make known in the Church, He put there; He put there. There it is, and if we do get communications from heaven from time to time all come from that place. "Of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace". So let us say, blessed be the glory of the Lord from the womb of the virgin. Blessed be the glory of the Lord for bringing "the first begotten into the world", when all the angels of God worshipped Him. Blessed be the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; blessed be His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth; filled with the love and wisdom and goodness and purposes of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Nothing that can be desired that is good, nothing can be sought at the hand of God, no communion with Him, no communications from Him, no union with Him, no fruit bearing as a result of union can be had, but in this way and from this, His place. 'Tis very wonderful to realise a little of the glory that is in this Person, Jesus Christ. All the Father's pleasure is in Him; all the Son's delight with the children of men is here and all the Spirit's grace to be conveyed to saints when they are dead in sins will be found to emanate from this, His place. All your revivings and pardons and putting away of transgressions, all the uplifting of God's light upon your souls, all the sweet communications, all encouragement that He is pleased to make, they all come from this, His place, this Man Jesus Christ. Yea, and even the reproofs that are given, the communications of solemn dealings and trembling dispensations, they all come from this, His place, the Lord Jesus Christ. O turn your eyes this way, my friends, I say, turn your eyes this way. You may, by divine dealing, have your eyes often turned within yourselves and look at your transgressions and mourn over them but when that is so there will come this, sooner or later, a turning of the eyes to the glory of the Lord. Ezekiel must have had, at this moment, a wonderful feeling in his soul, when the voice, that mighty rushing noise, distinct in its utterance in his soul, came. "Blessed be the glory of the Lord". You are to go to a hard hearted people, but the glory of the Lord is with you from His place; He comes. Now may the Lord open this mystery to our souls. We cannot enter into it without that opening that comes from the Lord the Spirit, but when He opens the mystery there is then a real looking, a true and gracious apprehension of what God has put in His dear Son for

His people, and that they are to receive of His fulness through eternity, and all that they need.

His place as light comes from it, light that is called the light of life, always forbids despair. The prophet had heavy tidings for Israel in Babylon but there was this that had been spoken previously by Jeremiah: I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. I know what I intend to do. I have dealt with you solemnly, sent you into captivity, and there you will remain for the 70 years appointed, but I shall bring you out and bring you back. "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place". Whenever you want in your souls a reviving, whenever you seek closer communion with God, whenever you seek to hear His voice in your own souls, you will find it always will be under the guidance of the Spirit, it will be directed to this, His place. Turn thy eyes to the Lord Jesus O mourning captive soul for everything needed, for your restoration is put here by God Himself, and in this place God is to dwell; He does dwell. It is said: The tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them. This tabernacle is, by the Spirit, in the Hebrews called the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man and this true tabernacle, Jesus Christ, has in it everything; there we are to worship. Is it not wonderful when the Spirit of Christ graciously gathers a sinner in his affections and desires to this, His place and where, as it were, He opens the treasures of heaven, the gold of grace, the pure robe of righteousness, the effective eye salve, the forgiveness of sins, the blood that gives victory in the conscience over sin and death and hell. Everything is here. The Apostle blessedly expresses it when he says, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". So you will never get rid of your poverty, O poor afflicted sinner, but as you receive the riches of grace. You will never get rid of your guilt but as the blood of Christ purges it from you, and never have your rags removed but as this blessed robe of righteousness is brought to you by the Lord.

This glory would cover all the years of captivity and the glory of Christ covers all the life and the trouble and the affliction and the mourning and the emptiness of His people; it covers all my friends. There is nothing you can need, nothing you can desire, but

what you will find here. However long you live this will be with you. Like as the glory followed Israel in the wilderness; they drank of that Rock, that spiritual Rock, and that Rock was Christ. They partook daily of the manna and that was the bread which God gave to them, a blessed type of the bread of life, and thus it will be that the glory of Christ will follow His people always and cover them always and be with them to protect them and keep them and bring them at last to their blessed heaven provided for them.

Now there is another place that I must name to you; it is Calvary where the Lamb was slain. Calvary where the whole of Deity was and met in the Man Christ Jesus. Calvary where the voice of love and justice was heard claiming and demanding satisfaction and where the thunder of Sinai was heard demanding that every breach that had been made should be made up or no sinner could be pardoned. Calvary - much we talk of it; little do we know of it. This is God's resting place preeminently; this is where the Father rests. This is the Church's resting place preeminently; she rests there. This is the resting place of the conscience; this is where a guilty conscience, clamouring for satisfaction finds that satisfaction. Well dear friends, blessed be the glory of the Lord from this, His place. This is the sun whose rays reach Zion to the uttermost bounds. This is where mercy reigns and truth and peace speak, meet, and kiss each other, so what glory there must be here. Whatever is knowable of God, whatever is communicable from God you will find here. The peace of God is here; peace that passeth all understanding, to keep the heart and mind is in Jesus Christ; nowhere else. Here it is that a sinner, while retaining and feeling this peace, he loses a sense of his sins, finds he has no sin; God has taken it away from him; God has taken it away from him. And O, we shall be glad one of these days, if we are not now; as the matter is opened to us we shall be glad that all the enormous crimes of our hearts could not alter God's love nor make the blood of Christ ineffectual. I speak to some who know what I mean, the enormous crimes of our hearts, the unbelief and all the things we have done against this blessed God. Blessed be His glory from this, His place in the removal from us of our sins so that when they are sought for they cannot be found, for I will pardon whom I reserve. The deeper your conviction of sin the sweeter will be forgiveness to you. The blacker your nature appears to your

faith, the more wonderful will be the pure righteousness of the Lord Jesus that hides every thing condemnable in you; and the weaker you feel yourself to be, the more blessed will be the communicated strength of Christ to your soul. This glory is very inviting. The glory of God on Sinai was repelling, terrible, not to be borne, and some of us know that; we have known the terror of the Almighty. Paul said he knew it. "Knowing the terror of the Almighty we persuade men". In my measure knowing that I persuade you that it is an awful thing to fall under that wrath of God which is expressed in a broken law. You will find it so I can tell you if you die exposed to that without the sheltering blood of Christ; you will find it terrible. It is a trembling thing to a saint, but what will it be to a reprobate, what will it be to one who has no shelter? The blood of Christ and that alone can prove a shelter to a sinner. Blessed be the glory of the Lord then from this, His place. Calvary - do not wander from Calvary O people of God. Be careful of your steps with respect to this. Every step in a wrong direction will lead you away from this. Every step into the world, every step into your own wicked self, every indulgence of any sin, everything that will harden your heart against God and against His fear and against His truth you will find lead you a long, long way from Calvary and as you get away from this place then there will be gloom, reproof, burden, darkness and no communications for a time to your souls. Therefore be careful about your steps with respect to Calvary. If you are careful with respect to Calvary, you will be careful in other respects. And again, seek to draw from this, His place everything that you need. Seek to draw comfort from Calvary, for there is no comfort away from it. Strength and beauty and purity and holiness in your heart and then in your life you must draw from Calvary. Humility you will have to get from Calvary if you ever have any. Blessed be God's glory then in this, His place, and from this, His place.

There is yet another place intimately connected with this but spoken of distinctly in the Scripture, namely the throne of grace to which we are invited by the Lord, through Paul. "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Some people are needy; I mean spiritual people. Grace which is God's favour; grace, which is God's power; grace, which manifests His glory; grace which is His favour, sweet grace

favouring you like a summer sun; grace, which is His power. "My grace is sufficient for thee"; sufficient for thee at this time; sufficient for the thorn in the flesh; sufficient for the exercise that you are in; sufficient for the temptations of Satan; sufficient for the solicitations of sin in you, to keep you from those evils. Grace is sufficient. Blessed be the glory of God. Have you had answers to prayer? The glory of God is in this place. Has He spoken comfortably to you from the throne of grace? Blessed be His glory. Blessed be His glory from this place, even where He sits to administer grace, to open the covenant of grace, and to make manifest to all interested in it and desiring to find it and feel it. He says, Come to Me, come to Me with your burdens and your difficulties and your trials. Come to this holy place where I sit as King; sit as King devising means of escape and finding out witty inventions for my people. Come to this place. Is it not wonderful that God should ever discover Himself on the throne of grace. We can understand that He should sit on the throne of judgment to condemn sinners such as we are, but that He should, so to speak, leave the throne of judgment to take a place on the throne of grace and there sit and say to His enemies, whom He makes friends, Come to Me, confess your sins; I will forgive them. Bring your troubles; I will help you to bear them. Open your mouth wide respecting your wants; I will fill it. Thus He says, thus He speaks to His people on this blessed throne.

Now may we conclude here for the moment and say, each to the other, look at the places named, and many others the Scriptures speak about, saying "Blessed be the glory of the Lord." Thanks be to Him who has discovered Himself as He has done in Holy Scripture and thanks be to Him for discovering Himself to our souls as some of us can say, and may we more and more see this glory, perceive it in our hearts and bless Him for it.

AMEN.