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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 16 July 1922

GENESIS 17 v 1

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine
the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto
him, I am the Almighty God, walk
before Me and be thou perfect"

It has been the wont of God to make appearances to His people in all ages and each person to whom God has made an appearance has thereby become acquainted with God. The great secret of acquaintance with God lies in His appearing in some manner, for who by searching can find out God? If He were not a self-revealing God, all creatures would lie in the darkness of everlasting ignorance of Him. He does not appear to all in the same manner and today His appearances are of a spiritual kind absolutely, and are made chiefly by means of the Scriptures opened and applied by the Holy Ghost. This appearance of God to Abram was a renewing, so to speak, and an enlarging of the promise which had already been made to that man of God, and everything that Abram could possibly need at that moment, and in all his future days, the Lord put here in this word: "I am the Almighty God walk before Me." As a consequence - "be thou perfect" The all-sufficiency of God then is that which, when made known, attracts and holds faith, gives ground of confidence, makes hope bright, inflames love; attaches the person of the sinner to the Almighty Himself. And I would, as helped, bring this great matter before you this morning, the all-sufficiency of the Almighty God, and if we receive it in faith we shall see that in an important sense we can well afford to be independent of all creatures, and it is to be very much observed how God carried the matter with Abram. With respect to his seed he was to be the progenitor of myriads of men, and yet God kept him waiting for the promised son until it was naturally impossible for him to have that son in the way promised. As if the Lord would say, emphatically say, My promise shall be made good, but reason shall be baffled. Natural impossibilities shall stand in the way, and I will demonstrate thereby My Own sufficiency without any dependence on

natural means. I will use them, but I will so use them, as that they themselves shall say, we could do nothing without God. He is sufficient. "I will make My Covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." This got Abram's heart and attention: "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for Me, behold, My Covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations."

First then God is sufficient for His Own Covenant. An important truth this; it will break your working arm, it will cry weakness on your strength, emptiness on your supposed sufficiency, and foolishness on every thought that something of your own must be added. It will say that though God may use means, He is independent of them, and if He does use them it will be, generally speaking, at a moment when they appear to be of no use at all. In the Covenant, as it is in the Scriptures made known, the Covenant that God made with Abram, we have several things in the enlargement of it, and the presenting of it has in its spiritual aspect several important things, as, first of all, divine teaching, and God is sufficient for this. The wisdom of this world is of no value, no use here. I will write My law in their heart, I will put it in their mind, and they shall not say every man to his neighbour and to his brother, know the Lord; that is to say, their teaching shall not be necessary here. Although God may use teachers as means, this is the thing, I will put My law into their heart, write it in their mind. My finger shall do the work. I will engrave the graving upon their spirits; I will do it. It is a great thing that God is sufficient for this, so that the ignorance of men shall be no hindrance to the teaching of the Spirit; that the blindness of our hearts shall not prevent the light of divine truth shining in; that the enmity which we have against God and His teaching shall simply vanish when He comes. The eye is opened and there is something shown. The heart is quickened and there is something felt. God draws near and the sinner falls on his face. Divine teaching makes God real to the person who is taught by Him. This is an important point in vital religion, and let me say this to you, it is within the Covenant. The old Covenant was faulty, finding fault with the people under it, for it was never given to them to give them eternal life, but to regulate their life as being creatures already, and because their hearts were turned aside from it, God found

fault with them. Then said He I will make a new Covenant (Hebrews 8 7/8) and clearly, as to substance, the Covenant of Grace is here, because Abram received it as having in it this - "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" and that, the Holy Spirit by Paul teaches, belongs to the Covenant of Grace and to the Person of Christ who came by Abram. God is sufficient for that.

Now I think that this is intended to meet a real case. I mean that there may be people, and there are people, who are made very conscious of their ignorance. Even while they feel a desire, a warm desire to know God, they are sensible of their profound ignorance of Him. They read the Scriptures and feel sometimes that they must say, I am not learned, I cannot read them. 'Tis to them as a sealed Book. But the Lord is sufficient for this. Gracious knowledge, saving knowledge, is not a matter of human acquisition, but of divine instruction. This should meet our cases and tell us that the Lord takes the foolish man and makes him wise unto salvation. This blessed Almighty One is able to teach the most foolish person. Here - and let me say it with a proper feeling and intention - He does not want your understanding, He does not need that you shall be able to grasp Him or anything belonging to Him. What He will have is this, He will put light into that understanding He has given you, and give you faith to receive that light, and in that light you will see light, and the Psalmist has it in the 119 Psalm: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple". Not words themselves standing alone, which are just so many letters put together, but the very inshining of those words instructs and makes wise all in whom they do shine. This, God is sufficient for. O He is able to make us wise. "I am the Almighty God". Now if we believe this, then the effect will be, as the Lord here speaks to Abram: "Walk before Me and be thou perfect". And does not the Apostle James take this up, in the spirit of it, when he says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him." "A double-minded man" says that Apostle again, "is unstable in all his ways". He does not walk before God in simplicity. He is not perfect, He is not sincere, and whole-hearted in the matter; with his eye on the creature, on himself, on somebody; his mind is not stayed on the Lord. Abram failed here more than once. Misguided by a misunderstanding wife, he took his own course. Misguided by his

own heart, and not having his eye on God, he denied his wife. In these instances he was not settled on God, his mind was not stayed on the Almighty. He did not, at those moments, believe that the Lord was all-sufficient. Sufficient for His Covenant, sufficient for His promise, sufficient to accomplish what He had said and promised. Therefore he turned aside. Whenever we, any of us, turn aside to the creature, to self - worst of all - then we are not single in our eye. "If thy eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light" which shall show thee the sufficiency of thy God; shall show thee His omnipotence, and His faithfulness, and His love, and His pity, and His care; shall show thee there is no need for thee to run here and there, but every reason why thy mind should be stayed on Himself. "I am the Almighty God". I am all-sufficient. A look by faith into the all-sufficiency of God, will stay the mind on Him, and then will come some of that peace that is spoken of: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." If the Lord should give us really to grasp this truth, the all-sufficiency of God for His Covenant, it would be a very great mercy, and in that, the point of divine teaching, He is able to make us wise unto salvation.

Another point in the Covenant for which God is able is this, the reception of sinners by Himself, to make them His people. "They shall be My people". Unfit in themselves for such an honour; unable in themselves for such a thing; to transplant themselves from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, to detach and cut themselves off from the world, and wild olive in which they were all by nature. God is sufficient for this great thing, to take a poor, wild olive branch, cut it out of its original stock, unite it to the good stock, Jesus Christ, and call it one of His Own. He is sufficient for this. You feel perhaps unfit for God; you are unfit for the world; you cannot make yourself a child of God as to your own feelings, and it is really so. Can you be one then? That is a question that may put you to it sometimes. Yes, said the Lord, they shall be My people. I will teach them and they shall be My people and I will be their God. They shall not be orphans now that I have cut them out of the world, drawn them away from themselves. They shall not be orphans for I will be their God. I will comfort them with that truth that they are Mine. I will be their Saviour; there is none

other; I know no other. And is not this wonderful? No matter how alienated we may feel, how far from God we may feel ourselves to be, it needs but this, that He should come in a time of love and take hold of us and embrace us and put us within the Covenant experimentally and make us to know that we do belong to Him and that He belongs to us; that we may say in heart: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." A conviction that this is His work will make us single-hearted, sincere people. It will fix our eye on Himself. We shall ask Him to do the business; we cannot. Nor are we worthy that He should do it, yet faith will ask Him to do it. O take us for Thine Own, said Moses to the Lord respecting Israel in a state of sin and exposedness through their idolatry. "Take us for Thine inheritance". Have you faith to ask the Lord to do that for you? Take me, an unworthy creature, a polluted sinner, for Thine inheritance. Give Me Thyself for my portion. "I will be their God." "They shall be My people". I am able for it. Who but God could have done this in purpose? Who but God could accomplish it in experience? Who but God can take one out of his old stock and his sinful state and state of condemnation and give him faith to cry mightily to be saved, and take that sinful person out, so to speak, of himself and unite him to Himself? The Almighty God, He is able, and more, He is willing, doubt no more.

And the third thing I would notice in the Covenant is this, the forgiveness of sins and the non-remembrance of iniquity. I will forgive their sins and remember them no more. And if God wont remember your sins, who shall bring them up against you? If you are forgiven, if you, in your conscience, are forgiven, you will remember your sins, but that is nothing compared with what it is for God not to remember them; nothing. It is a pain indeed, a grief, and a shame to us, but if He will not remember them, what an amazing mercy. And it is to be observed that when "not remembering" is applied to the Lord, there is a good deal in it, for when we forget anything it does not exist to us for the time. It has no existence in our mind when we have forgotten it; clean gone. And this defect of a person, the Lord takes to Himself, as it were, and says, now that is just how I will be with regard to your sins; I wont remember them; that is to say, they shall not be before Me; I will cast them behind My back into the depths of the sea. And when they are sought for by the accuser of the brethren, sought for by your own tender conscience, sought for perhaps by some

accuser, somebody against you, says the Lord, they shall not be found. Beg of God, dear friends who fear His Name, and feel sin, I say, beg of God to end every matter of controversy between Himself and you in the blood of Christ. If all controversies are ended thus, they will be well ended. They will never rise up against you again.

The blood of Christ, a precious blood,
Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not,
And reconciles the soul to God,
From every folly, every fault.

Nothing shall be lacking here. No sin shall come up, no defect shall be remembered. All our delinquencies shall be done away, our dreadful transgressions blotted out as a thick cloud, and as a cloud our sins. Now if we believe this it will enable us to walk before the Lord in sincerity; we shall be perfect; the eye will be single; the mind will be fixed and stayed on God. We shall enter into what the Psalmist said of Himself: "My heart is fixed, O God my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." And next to this happiness is this, when a person's heart is settled this way, when he can say, God only do I seek, Christ only do I need, and desire, the Spirit alone I would have for my teacher and sealer unto the day of redemption. That, I say, is the next best thing to experiencing in your own heart that you have this God for your God. "I am the Almighty God" sufficient for My Own Covenant.

Sufficient for My promise. Look at this in the next place and briefly - I am sufficient for My promise. What is the promise? The promise to the church is that she shall be where Christ is. But in her natural state she is near hell, lying at its gates in wickedness, lying there in ignorance, in darkness, in death, in guilt, in bondage; that is her natural state. Everyone knows that who is born again, and acknowledges it. Now what an arm it must be that can reach to sinners who are lying at hell's gate in condemnation, and pluck them thence and carry them eventually to heaven. What love it must be to reach them when they are lying in their blood in the open field, dead and loathsome, and what an atonement that must be that can remove utterly and for ever that evil condition and state and render all the whole church spotless, without blame, and without reproof; nothing

reprovable. Now God alone is sufficient for this. Just let us take a little view of it as we may be helped. Take our natural state; it is one of alienation from the life of God through ignorance and the deceitfulness of sin. It is spoken of in the word as being "dead in trespasses and sins". "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". What a state. Nothing between God and them but creatureship. No other union, no other relationship. Creatureship. Creatureship guilty; creatureship dead, obnoxious to the anger of God, deserving hell. It is a solemn condition to be born in, yet every man is born in this condition. And to see this is to see that we are utterly helpless, that we are at the absolute disposal of God, that He should do with us just what He is pleased to do; that if He should leave us to die in that state, no injustice would attach to Him. In that, as in everything else, He is just. And this is very solemn as believed by any sinner. Now God is sufficient for this, and what does He say? O, He says, I am come, I am come by incarnation, I am come into this world. I am come to represent My Father to you, to represent His love and His mercy and His purposes of grace. I am come that they, the dead, the sheep whom I have called, and shall call, might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. "I am the life". There is no divine life out of Christ. I am come that they might have it. Hence when the idolatrous Ephesians were called, that became true in them that was written to them: "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". The glory of the grace of God is in the new birth. The glory of the power of God is in the new birth. The glory of the love of God is in the new birth. The glory of the efficacious work of God is in the new birth. Only God is sufficient for this. As He only could create the world out of nothing, as He alone could form our bodies of the dust, and then breathe into our nostrils the breath of life, so spiritually He alone is able for this great thing, to bring a sinner into a new state, to change his name from sinner to believer; to a child of God. As your beginning in religion is, so will be your finish. If you be not born again, then you cannot end well. But if you be born again then heaven is yours. Though hell should over and again come in between you and that blessed inheritance, it is yours. Ah but how can I get there? "I am the Almighty God", that answers the question; I am sufficient for all your needs. I am sufficient for your conscience. What, can none but God be sufficient for a sinner's conscience? No. When that

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conscience is quickened, when the light of divine truth shines into it, when the person convinced sees what God claims at His hands, even himself entirely; heart and mind and thoughts and affections and loving his neighbour as self is loved; O, says the sinner, I cannot meet this demand; then I am lost. The statement is true, you cannot meet the demand. The consequence may not be true and shall not be true if you are the Lord's. Though you cannot meet the demand, Jesus Christ did. If sin is finished in you, it will be death eternally. If sin was finished for you by Christ it will be heaven eternally; and it is this truth, that the death of Christ only can satisfy the conscience, that I spoke to you. He is sufficient for the conscience. Sufficient to pacify it, to give it rest, to fill it with peace, to make it realise that God is on the side of the sinner and the sinner is on the side of God. The blood of Christ answers this, meets the conscience, pleases the conscience as it pleases God. It is good to have an honest, enlightened conscience, a conscience that stands on God's side, a conscience that would not accept any remedy if offered to it, save that remedy which is applied by the Holy Ghost. A conscience that would not be pleased with any sort of salvation, but must have God's Own salvation. "I am the Almighty God"; I am sufficient for this. The promise to the church is a great promise, and when the conscience is satisfied, when you feel that the blood of sprinkling has given you peace, when you feel that you have had so much of God shown to you as that now the world and its glitter, its tinsel, its vanities, its emptiness, all, all have been revealed to you in that precious work of God, and you say, poor world, bless God I am out of it; poor world, it has nothing to feed my soul, nothing to do me real good; poor world; I say, when you say that, it is a great thing. But you have got to meet it, or, to speak as Bunyan does, you have to pass through Vanity Fair, and here is danger, and who is sufficient for this? The promise of God meets it: I will never leave thee, He says; I will never forsake thee. "I will guide thee with Mine eye". And faith says to Him, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory". O how sufficient is the Lord. Now when a believer's eye is turned into himself - rather his unbelief works on himself - he says, I can never get through this difficulty. I shall never be able to stand under this burden. I am afraid I shall miss after all. O but says the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for thee". I am strong; it needs not that you should be

strong. My wisdom is enough; it needs none of yours to bring you through. I will be your wisdom. "I will guide thee with Mine eye" Then faith looks to Him and here the child of God is simple in his heart. He eschews, as Job did, evil, and is perfect in that particular. His mind is stayed on the Lord and he says, though I am weak, I am strong; though I am foolish, I am wise; though I am empty, I have enough; having nothing I possess all things. His mind is stayed here. He walks before the Lord. He is in trouble, but he says, God will bring me through it. He has difficulties but he can commit his way unto the Lord. His mind is stayed on God.

The Lord is sufficient for His promise, I say again, with regard to all the troubles and afflictions of His children. Troubles in providence; you will never be able to detach from your experience the providential dealings of God with you. By means of them He exercises you; by means of them He gives you many an errand to the throne of grace, and, inasmuch as He sees you under them burdened and reeling to and fro and staggering like a drunken man, He says: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". There is enough in Me. Dear friends in the Lord, when He lets you see something of this sufficiency, then you come running to Him with enlarged hearts - "I will run in the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" - and without hesitation you bring yourself and your troubles and your necessities to this all-sufficient God. What are our necessities? They are of two kinds. Necessity of grace - we do need more grace - and necessity in providence. Some kind of necessity comes upon us, and I believe God will make us know in spirit what His Israel knew in the wilderness. They could neither buy, nor grow, nor create food for themselves. They were dependent on Him who was in heaven and who had brought them into the wilderness, and we must know that we are in that condition spiritually and also with respect to providence sometimes. No one thing will grow with us, nor can we buy, we must have everything from God. New life, new light, new experience, new unction, fresh anointing, sweet mercies falling again. Conversion frequently we need. All must come from heaven, and there is a fullness of grace, a fullness of all we need in Christ, and the Apostle Paul pledges, if I may so speak of it, pledges God to all His needy people, saying, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by

Christ Jesus." There is your bank, O sinner, there is your bank. Go to it, put Him in remembrance of His promise. He says so: "Put Me in remembrance". And of old some did it. They said "Remember Thy holy promise". Go to God; leave creatures. God may use them but you leave them and leave the use of them to Himself. When you should need one, and how you need, God knows and He will take care all shall come. What, shall want ever destroy a child of God? Shall lack of any grace destroy a child of God? The lack may destroy our peace but not our soul. In providential troubles has He not enough? He said in one place: "If I were hungry I would not tell thee". The gold is Mine, the silver is Mine; the cattle on a thousand hills, they belong to Me. "Open thy mouth wide" Come to Me with requests; bring your wants to Me. I, all wise, and all kind and Almighty, have enough for you; come to Me. We are ready enough to go to creatures, reluctant to go to Him. But when He comes and turns things round we have then an alacrity in the mind to go to Him, a reluctance to go to the creature. Trust in Him; trust in Him, you will not fail, you cannot fail. How can you sink, how can you fail, how can you die of want, if you have this good, this full God? There is a full river at His right hand. There is a fullness in Jesus Christ that ever abides to answer the need of His children. A fullness of love, and of wisdom, and of power, and of kindness, and of faithfulness, so that there shall be no real necessity that shall kill any child of God. "I am the Almighty God", able for My promise, sufficient for My promise. It is not difficult for a creature to promise more than God will help him to perform. It is not difficult for a parent to promise a child more than he can do. He may promise something tomorrow, and may not be able tomorrow, may be smitten down, but here is a God who knows all things; all His works from the beginning of the world; all the needs, the empty places, the wilderness, the necessities, the weaknesses, the fears of His children, and He says, I will be with thee. What, though in a river? He says I will be with thee there, and it shall not overflow thee. Is the fire now round you? Yes, you say, it is, but God is there. The flame shall not kindle upon thee, for I, the Lord thy God, am with thee. Is that enough? It is to faith. If faith be in exercise that is quite enough. O sinner, canst thou believe this? Faith in the Lord God; O what a great thing it is to believe in Him. Have the faith of God, said Christ. There are times when the Lord gives evidences of His sufficiency, when He gives

gracious proofs of His sufficiency. In the day of His sojourn on earth, the Almighty God, Jesus Christ, gave great evidences of His sufficiency. Do you need life? He raised the dead. "Lazarus come forth". Do you need some supply? He gave evidence of His power to give you all you need. He fed multitudes of men, beside women and children, of a few loaves and fishes. The sufficiency is evidenced by the works of God. But more than that, the sufficiency is not only evidenced by some of His ways in providence by His blessed Word, but it is proved in the experience of His children. One may say, I believe I know that. Now how do you know it? Well, he may say, as far as I am able to speak about omnipotence, I think I know it in my heart, for the very power that brought Christ out of the grave brought me out of unbelief, brought me away from the law, and the bondage of the law; translated me from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. That is a good way of knowing omnipotence. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might so know it. He prayed that they might know the exceeding greatness of God's power in that He brought Jesus Christ from the dead. That is the power that makes a believer, that makes a sinner follow God, that makes one, who was indolent in spirit, earnest and diligent to make his calling and election sure. That is the power too that will touch the heart of one and bring him to submit to the will of God. What cannot the Lord do? One may say, I think I know a little of omnipotence because on an occasion I felt my heart like a stone and the next minute it was like wax in the flame. The love of God made it like wax. I know omnipotence says he because my will was strong and stubborn - so stubborn that no arguments of my friends could move it, no entreaties could move it - but there came a moment when I said from my heart: "Thy will be done" and I did not want my own will; it was brought into unison with the will of God. Hang about this God. O you who have had that experience, hang about this God. There is nothing you need this side heaven, nothing that you are to have the other side when you reach that blessed place, that God is not able to give, that He will withhold; nothing.

"I am the Almighty God" sufficient for My promise. Think of it, sufficient for the promise. Look at the promise, if I may say so, beginning in eternity, with respect to the Person of Jesus Christ. Fulfilled that was in His incarnation. See it in Christ fulfilled when He said: "It is finished". See it as coming to the grave

when you were dead in sin, quickening you and bringing you forth, and trace it in your experience from that day. How low you have been; how it has lifted you up. How empty you have been; how the Lord has filled you with His mercy. How guilty you have felt; how He has forgiven you. How dead you have often been in prayer and supplication, rather neglected it; then the Spirit of grace and supplication has come again upon you, and you have prayed with all your heart. And how, in danger, the Lord brought you on safely; in weakness He has strengthened you. I am that God who has done all these things for you. Do you think that He will let you go after having done so much? Can you judge of Him thus: Rather must you not, do you not, say

Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near
And for my relief will sure appear

Do you not believe that, though for a time His purpose may lie hid from your view, and His dealing may seem strange, and contrary to your bests interests, the day will come when you will say, God is His Own interpreter; He has made it plain. Now I see that I ought not to have expected to see His path when it was in the sea. He will not always let us trace Him. His path shall be in the mighty waters. You shall not see anything distinct at all in His workings. But the day will come when you will say: In my distress I cried unto the Lord and He heard me. Then He thundered against the enemy (Psalm 18 v 6 and 13). Then He sent lightning in some providence. Then He took me, He drew me out of many waters. And then you will say, continuing, "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." (Psalm 116 verses 1 and 2). Was not the Psalmist then walking before the Lord? Was he not then perfect in the sense of that word as God uses it? Not free of sin, but single-hearted, whole-hearted, his mind stayed on God, on omnipotence, omnipotent love, omnipotent pity; on divine fullness. He is sufficient for His promise.

AMEN.