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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 8 March 1921

HEBREWS 7 v 24/25

"But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath
an unchangeable Priesthood. Wherefore, He
is able to save them to the uttermost that come
unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to
make intercession for them"

The Holy Ghost in this Epistle compares two priests, Aaron and Christ. Aaron is inferior, Christ is superior. The inferiority of Aaron and all things belonging to his office is manifested, manifested first in the fact that he could not continue by reason of death. He and all his successors, his sons, his successors in the office, must die. Christ abides, ever lives. Aaron, in all the offerings which he, by divine commandment, offered, never reconciled one sinner to God, never put away one sin. There was always a conscience of sin left behind the offerings of the Aaronic priesthood. Christ, in all the glorious superiority of His Priesthood, shines in this most prominently, that by one offering He put away sin; that He perfected for ever all for whom He offered Himself without spot to God; that there is no recurrence, is to be no recurrence, of that sacrifice. What an amazing thing. The inferiority of Aaron's priesthood is also seen in this, that the abolishing of it came to pass, and when it was abolished no oath was broken. He, Aaron, was made a priest without oath, so that when the Lord had no further use for that priesthood, there was no breach of a word, no breach of an oath. Christ is above Aaron in this respect, as in others, that He was called after the Order of Melchisedec, and the Lord swore unto Him: "Thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedec". So we poor Gentiles, and as many of us in particular now here, who feel sin, and the burden of guilt, and the power of corruption, and want, and long, and pray to get access to God, have no laborious ritual, no numerous sacrifices, washings, and divers ordinances to observe, but, blessed with faith, and the discovery by the Holy Ghost of Christ to that faith, have this only High Priest to

whom to go, Jesus Christ. And His Priesthood has this in it which is singularly beautiful, and comfortable, when made known, namely that, though Christ be Almighty God and Man, as Man He suffered and is therefore touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Because He was in all points tempted like as we are, He is able to sympathise. He has an acquired ability to succour, to feel for those who are troubled, and tempted. Sympathy arises in the mind of a person for one who is suffering because the sympathiser has had the same pain. If you have not been bereaved, you cannot sympathise with a friend who is bereaved. You may condone, you may feel deeply, but you cannot say, Now I know all your pains for I have felt them myself. Christ knows all the pains of His suffering saints, all their grief for sin, and their trouble, for He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is this wondrous Man then above Aaron, this wondrous God revealed in the Man Christ Jesus, dwelling in Him, of whom the Holy Ghost writes this so comfortable word of our text. Because He continueth ever in the office as a Priest, therefore He has an unchangeable Priesthood. The Lord Jesus Christ in His office of Priest never changes. His Priestly office will never pass to another. It was comfortable, no doubt, to one who had unwittingly killed another, and who fled from the avenger of blood and entered into one of the cities of refuge, that, so long as the priest, in whose lifetime he entered into that city, lived, he was safe. And when you, O poor sinner, have entered into rest in that one only hiding place, and refuge for sinners, in the Lord Jesus, so long as He lives you will live. What a comfortable doctrine it is in itself, and what a comfort it is to those to whom it is made known by the Holy Ghost. Does Jesus live? Is the High Priest alive today? Is He at rest now, having finished His work of sacrificing? Yes. Then if we have entered by Him into that wondrous sacrifice, that blessed rest, we are secured. You often feel insecure, but we are secured. His death will be eternal life. His life poured out will be life to our souls. His righteousness made known will cover us. It is a great mercy to see, by precious faith, a continuing, an unchanging, unchangeable Priest. "This Man because He continueth ever" in His Person. The essential immortality of the Lord Jesus is a blessed truth. The only reason He died was that His Father commanded Him to give His life up, and He voluntarily covenanted to do so, otherwise He could not have died, because He had no sin. Sin is the root and cause of mortality. Jesus had no sin of

His Own, and therefore corruption could not enter. That is to say, death could not touch Him naturally, but it did touch Him as He had offered to die, agreed to die. It did come to Him, the curse of the law came to Him, so He died. But He continues, as a Person He continues. They said - when they were mourning His death, and removal from them - they said, rather it was said to the disciples, "Come, see where the Lord lay". And after His resurrection, they said, "He is not here", and the angels directed the women to go to His disciples and to say to them, Go to Galilee and there you shall see Him whom you are seeking. He continues in heaven

A Man there is a real Man

O blessed, comfortable truth

A Man there is a real Man
With wounds still gaping wide

and He is in heaven

That wondrous Man of whom we tell
Is true Almighty God

and He is in heaven. When the Spirit gives us faith we look to Him. Faith penetrates dark things, and clouds, and goes beyond reason, and says, He is in heaven. And if you see a Man in heaven by faith you will cast an anchor into Him as in this Epistle it is: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that which is within the veil". Into Christ living hope enters. And because He continues in His Person, He continues in His office. As He cannot change in His Person so He cannot change in His office, the office of a Priest. "He hath an unchangeable Priesthood" Yes, He finished His work on the cross, but as an Intercessor for His people, yet on earth, He is continuing His Priestly office in heaven, and until the last vessel of mercy is gathered home, He will continue it. When that is done, the whole church will be conformed to His unchanging Kingship and Priesthood. An unchangeable Priest, an unchangeable Priesthood. We change constantly. Alas we change badly very often, some of us know it painfully, but here is One in heaven to

whom the Holy Ghost directs faith and it is said He is not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, and that is a remarkable chapter which I was reading just now, where it is said, the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It comes and it divides a man's thoughts, joints, and marrow, and discerns the thoughts, and intents of his heart, and tells him how evil they are; how filthy, how lost he is, therefore, but it does not leave him there. When Christ sends a living word to discover you to yourselves, you will sink much, but He wont leave you there. He will bring it to light that you have in heaven One who is representing you, is a Priest for you, and so the Apostle says, by the Spirit, Come boldly. O shiver not, and stand not outside, but come boldly unto the throne of grace, bad as you are. This is never contradicted; the light shows what is there, and it is a true discovery; but though it be so, come boldly unto the throne of grace. What a great mercy it is to be gathered to the throne of God's heavenly grace. The type of this was in the Mercy Seat; the Ark in which were the Tables of Testimony, covered with the Mercy Seat, and said God to Moses, "I will meet with thee there". So He says in the gospel to His people, I will meet with you in Christ, I will meet with you on My throne of grace and I will commune with you there. All the things which are in My heart, the thoughts that I have toward you, I will communicate them to you. O what a mercy it is to be gathered to this spot. And because He continues in His Person and in His work, He is able to save. We need saving, O a great deal of saving some of us need daily, and hourly, and every moment. He is able to save, and to save evermore, never failing, and to save to the uttermost. And this "uttermost" is put here by the Eternal Spirit in great mercy. It is a wonderful favour that God has put this word here. Evermore will Christ watch over His poor people and be attracting them to Himself. And His ability is in His intercession for this reason, as I apprehend, that His intercession is an unceasing presentation to His Father of that infinite merit which His sacrifice has; it all rests there. Let us look a little as enabled at the "uttermost". The uttermost depth of guilt, the uttermost height of wickedness, the uttermost length and breadth of wandering and running wildly away from God; the uttermost of our wicked thoughts, our abominable unbelief, all that wickedness that is in us that stretches out itself to this and to that evil,

Christ can meet. Perhaps some here feel that they have got as far from God as they can short of hell. That is, their thoughts are so dreadful, their irreverence so wicked, their unbelief so powerful, their rebellion against God so grievous, their hearts so hard, their minds so blind, they can scarcely imagine that it would be possible for them to be worse than they are; they have got so far away. Christ has unsearchable riches. If His Word has searched us, and brought to light so much of ourselves, and of our ruin, as to bring us to feel uttermost sinners, there is in Him more wealth, more love, more grace, more pardons, and more sanctification, and more power than we are able to imagine. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask" - and it goes further than that - "or think". And in the Ephesians the Spirit says, by Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." You have seen something of your own sin, but very little of that, but you have not seen much of Christ's great grace. Paul says: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor". You see that doctrine, you believe it, but what is included in that poverty that Christ voluntarily came into - what it means, what it contains, the wealth of it, the grace of it, the glory of it, the heaven of it, the power of it - you little know. That, as I judge, is what is intended, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Therefore uttermost sinners are preserved from despair by getting sights of this power that Christ has as a Priest. Able to save. And in this salvation there are, as to experience, some things to be mentioned, as first, the motions, and operations of His Spirit on the heart, as He is sent by Christ to draw, and gather sinners to Himself. He sends His Spirit to those who, but for that Spirit and His grace, would soon despair. He sends Him, yea sends Him to old men, and old women - old in the ways of God - who get very low, sink very much, get very depressed because of their sinfulness. He sends His Spirit to them and gives them to see more into the Person and Priesthood of Christ than they ever have seen, and tells them by that sight, Now He is able, He will save you evermore. All these distressing feelings, all this depression because of sin shall not hinder, nor really hurt you; press on.

If thou press on the crowds will fly

He will look in; He will come, as He did of old, and put His hand in by the hole of the door, He will remove that indolence of heart, and take away the hindrance of it. He will remove every bar and cause you to go after Him, which answers to the word in the fourth chapter of this epistle which was read: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest". She had rested badly, she had rested on her own bed, she had rested carnally. Now she was disturbed from that, and O her fear and her trouble. She was pulled from that and then saw Him, and that is what sometimes has to be done with some of us. We have to be pulled away from a false rest that we may find rest in this blessed One. He ceased from His Own works both of creation and redemption and has entered into His rest, and when, by faith, a poor, old sinner, is brought again to this, he finds that his wanderings, and fallings, and failings, are all forgiven, and he rests in the blessed work of Jesus Christ. Every kind of sin. Well, the Spirit is sent to draw, attract, move, and encourage, and strengthen, all who are longing for this rest that is in the Person and work of Christ. He is sent for that. Do we feel that? It is a mercy to have wisdom to observe every operation of the Holy Ghost on the heart, and I believe that we shall profit if we are enabled to observe this, when there is a moving, a drawing after Christ; when, as if the Spirit should say

Pour not on thyself too long

on thy unworthiness, and thy ingratitude, and thy wanderings. Look to Jesus, look to His infinite sacrifice, rest in Him.

And secondly, in this being saved by Christ, by His ability, is this that He does send the light of His gospel into the heart from time to time, whereby some enlarged view of what He is is given. You will follow me, I am sure, those of you to whom such a mercy comes. He sends fresh light, and sweeter, and clearer, with respect to His Person and His work, and His Priesthood, and the soul gets an enlarged view of Christ and His Priestly office in that fresh light, whereby there is an attraction, an instruction, an influence, a power, that the soul is sensible of. And if rest is not immediately entered into, there is a renewed energy in the heart toward that; there is a renewed labour to enter into it. "Let us labour to enter into that rest". It says to the sinner, None of your sins, none of your

sinkings, of your fears, shall keep you out of this rest.

Cease from your own works, bad or good
And wash your garments in My (Christ's) blood

It is far easier to talk about ceasing from your own works than really to do so. It is so natural for us to be working or attempting to work that we do it, perhaps, unconsciously, but really by faith to cease from everything and find ourselves - lost, and poor, and depressed often at heart, sinking in fear - led to cast an evil case, a sinful soul, on the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever liveth to intercede. Does Christ enlighten us? Is He to us the light that has come that we should not walk in darkness? Does He give us to see the evil of being outside Himself? Does He give us to see the infinite mercy of being saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation? Does He give us to see what a mercy it is to be in union with Him? to be saved by Him? If He does, it is part of His great power to save to the uttermost. It is a harbinger of good like the dawn of day that says ere long the sun will be at its meridian. It is a word, as it were, that says, press on, labour to enter into that rest which, when you do enter into it, will say in your heart, it is heaven begun below.

Sometimes He does this in His work of saving, namely He drops a heavenly smile, He drops a most encouraging look upon a soul, He gives the soul to perceive He is more ready to save than was ever imagined. He gives the sinner to perceive a little of His infinite kindness. O, it is a wonderful thing to get this. He is able to give it. Yes, to save from sinking, and from despair, He will send this sweet light like a heavenly beam of kindness into the soul. "Truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eye to behold the sun". When the heavens are black with clouds, and the clouds are emptying themselves upon the earth, is it not sweet to see a rift and the beams of the beautiful sun through that rift telling that, though hidden, he is there, and saying that he has yet power to cleanse these clouds, and make the sky clear. And is it not so with regard to Christ's inward grace perceived at times, a light that shines upon the road, a light that comes from the sky that is so black with

clouds, a light that penetrates a dark understanding, and that says, The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings. Yes, and He does also give His people to know His power over Satan as well as over sin. He has power to rebuke the enemy and the avenger, and He will do it too. Uttermost in sin, and uttermost in sinking, you may be, and driven to the uttermost in your feelings by the tempter. Still this ability of Christ stands. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him"

Now a few words about this coming. This coming is the motion of faith. No matter where you are, or what your attitude may be of body, this coming is a real motion of faith, whereby the sinner cries, prays, confesses, entreats, argues, wrestles, and urges, can take no denial, and this is blessedly made known to the feeblest. The feeblest can pray the best. The feeblest soul can best wield the weapon of all prayer. Coming to God has in it several very wonderful things, as first, it has honest confession in it. Faith will never let you be silent about your unworthiness and sinfulness. Reason says, I would like to go if I were better. Faith says, That wont do, that is not the gospel way. Faith says, Acknowledge, acknowledge, acknowledge; make thy worst condition known. Uncover the spots, expose the leprosy, confess the deceit, and the hypocrisy of your nature, let it all go out. Make thy worst condition known, and the condition grows worse. Age does not bring weakness to sin. The body grows decrepit, sin grows stronger apparently, and that is often a perplexity. How is it if one has grace that sin should be so - I wont say predominant, for the Lord does not let it predominate except by occasions - but how is it that it is so pervasive, and so persistent. Slay them not, lest My people forget. And with this it is a mercy to find that you do serve God with your mind. It is a mercy to find that there is in you a resistance, though it be weak: "My weak resistance, ah how vain" But what a mercy there is a resistance. Now in coming there is that, you will make your worst condition known. Pride says, I cannot go like that. You think perhaps it is humility; it is not. The greatest humility lies in the exercise of faith when a sinner goes with what he is, and what he has done, and what he feels, and rests on the atonement of Christ. In coming there is an urging, a pleading, a urging on God's notice this, His mercy. His kind promises, the riches of Christ's grace, the ability of Christ to save, and the feeling that

you cannot give in, cannot give up: Lord save me; save or I perish; I am lost. And faith does plead, yes, faith pleads, pleads Christ's blood, pleads His Person in the worth of it, in the beauty of it; His death in the life and the efficacy of it; His promise in the freeness, in the faithfulness of it; pleads His merciful power in the far reaching that it can make; pleads that He would come.

"Cometh to God". It would not matter where you went if you did not go to God. There is no religion where there is no coming to God, but where there is real grace there will be a coming to God; must come. Believing that He is, you go to Him. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." And in this coming there is a bringing of everything. We are not limited by God to bringing that which we have to bring, first of all so to speak, namely our sinfulness, and our sins, and guilt, but everything, the weakness we feel, our liability to fall, our readiness to commit evil, our troubles in providence, family matters, and difficulties, and every need, and necessity; these things are all inside "coming to God". And for all of them the Priesthood of Christ is needed. How could we deal with an absolute God? but God in Christ says, Come to Me, make known your requests, be careful for nothing. If you want heaven, that is to say, if you want Christ, He will tell you to come; He will give you what you want in eternal blessedness, and also He will give you what you want in providence, that is, what is best for you. Wherefore? Because He is an abiding Person, because He has consequently an unchangeable Priesthood, being made a Priest with an oath. Therefore He is able to meet the worst cases, able to save them. Able to save every poor comer who may be dashed to the ground by the enemy, may sink into despondency through fear of guilt. Able; though one should be saying, I have so much trouble in providence it looks very serious for me and is much against me who am such a sinner, He is able to save even that person. Well, I believe there is not a living soul present who will be able to bring an objection against this gospel that will stand, not one. If you have many objections to bring and if you brought them to me and I had grace and wisdom given to me, I might answer every one out of the gospel. There is not one that is not met in the gospel. All manner of sin, all manner of evil, everything you can imagine outside that one exception that is so solemn, the sin

against the Holy Ghost, and no child of God ever commits that. Outside that, I say, the gospel will overcome every objection you can imagine and bring. The gospel is free, and what fills the gospel with peculiar glory is this Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in it is everything. The offering, the altar, the sacrifice, the Priest who offers satisfaction to God, the opening of a fountain for sin and uncleanness, the putting away of all iniquity, the opening of heaven; all things are included in this. I wish I could speak better of Him and of what He is, but even though I have spoken so feebly, the Lord can make use of these words that I have uttered for your encouragement in respect of yourselves. Poor sinner, by temptation you may be distracted; by a sense of sin you may think now whoever is inside I am not; but I say this, you will be pulled in one day. May it come even now if it be the Lord's will, that you may prove what is said to be true: "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" for this reason that there in heaven He is at the right hand of God presenting always that infinitely wonderful death of His, that infinite merit of His death. This is what He is doing in interceding. Can He open His mouth in vain for you? No.

Raise thy downcast eyes and see
Numbers do His throne surround
These were sinners once like thee
But have full salvation found

May the Lord command His blessing to rest upon us.

AMEN.