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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 24 September 1930

HEBREWS 8 v 10-13

"For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. In that He saith, A new Covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away"

The Scripture reveals various Covenants, some which declare God's purpose without any connection with, or agreement with, a creature. When the flood had passed, and the eight persons that were saved in the Ark had gone forth, "God spake to Noah, and his sons with him, saying and I, behold, I establish My Covenant with you, and with your seed after you" , and with every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air. That is, it was His resolution, His revealed purpose, never again to destroy the earth. That was not what would properly be called a Covenant, but a revelation of God's purpose. He made a Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, that was primarily a Covenant with respect to their descendants who should be formed into a nation, a nation that God would have to be a nation of priests to Himself. But in that Covenant there was beneath the declaration this great thing, the Covenant of Grace. In that, all the families of the earth are to share. There was a Covenant between God and Israel. He promised to bless the nation as long as the nation obeyed Him in the law that was given, and solemn threatenings were in that Covenant, that if the people disobeyed Him, then He would scatter them, and that is today solemnly fulfilled.

The Covenant in the text is different from that. Finding fault with the people under the old Covenant, He made a new Covenant. The old Covenant answered its purpose, but God found fault with the people who were disobedient to it, and this is declared in the prophesy of Jeremiah, and brought into this Epistle. Under that old Covenant was the tabernacle, and all that it contained. With itself, God made a type, a blessed type of His Son, and of His church. But when that Covenant had fulfilled its purpose, and come to its fullness of time, it was done away, and the new Covenant is here set before us. If that first Covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. The Covenant itself was not faulty - God could not give a faulty thing - but it was faulty in this, that it did not secure the obedience of all who were under it, and in it. And finding fault with them, the people under that Covenant, He said He would bring in another Covenant. "Finding fault with them, He saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My Covenant, and I regarded them not" (Hebrews 8 v 8 and 9). He took them by the hand as a father would take his child, and led them out of Egypt with mighty signs, and wonders, and temptations, and then they professed loyalty to Him, and they said, whatever He told them to do, they would do, and they always broke what they said. They did exemplify the heavy word of Joshua, who said to them before he died - "Ye cannot serve the LORD". Ye cannot serve Him for He is holy. They said - "Nay; but we will serve the LORD". He said - Ye cannot serve Him in that Covenant that requires obedience as a condition of the blessings. You cannot serve God. What a testimony! And if the Lord speaks to us in that Covenant, though not in that form, we shall painfully, and guiltily exemplify the word - "Ye cannot serve the LORD." And the reason is this, He is holy, and the obedience of a sinful creature must have sin in it, and therefore cannot reach that holy God. Do you believe that? Do you realise what that means - Ye cannot serve Him; He is holy. He is holy, and your best is sinful. Your best is stained, and dyed with sin. Do you feel that sometimes about your prayers? Do you feel it when you read the Scriptures sometimes? Do you feel it in hearing? Do you feel it in communion with the saints? Is your love pure? Is it

unselfish? Are you always holy? Do you reach God in this, His wonderful nature? No. Therefore Joshua spake the truth when he said "Ye cannot serve the LORD" for He is holy. This, when believed, and felt, gives to the new Covenant a singular beauty, and glory, because, in that, His people can serve Him, for the holiness that is required is given to them. I would press this on your notice, for poor sinful man, even with grace, has so much legality in him, that he is very apt to think that, having grace, he can do a little. God shakes us out of that more or less distinctly, till at last we come to say, we cannot serve Him; we cannot serve Him. Of that I am convinced in my own case. I cannot serve Him in the ministry, I cannot rise to His nature. I cannot rise even to the standard that is in my own mind for the ministry. I am always short, I am always troubled. But God is holy. I wish we had deeper convictions of the holiness of God. We should be more sober people than we are. We should be more tender than we are. We should be more jealous of God's nature than we are. If the Lord would do this for us, it would be a great blessing.

Now said the Lord, I will make a new Covenant. "For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord." The Covenant of Grace is to be regarded in two ways, which I will name. First, as it is an absolute Covenant, made in, and by, the Trinity. Just absolute, nothing behind, nothing after, as there is nothing before; an absolute Covenant, just complete. The Father's electing love in it, complete. The Son's incarnation, and subordination, and dependence, and prayers, and death; complete. His resurrection is a proof of all that, for He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1 v 4). And the part of the Holy Ghost in the Covenant, to be the Regenerator, the Teacher, the Guide, the Revealer of Christ, in the Covenant; that was complete. Paul, speaking of a Covenant, even among men, says, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, nor addeth thereto. Anybody cannot come and take your Will, and add Codicils to it; cannot come and disannul it. It is just a complete Covenant, yet it is not at all in force while you live. In itself it is complete, but it has no force while you live. Now that I think is what must be said of the Covenant of Grace in this view, that it is absolute, nothing to be added, nothing to be taken away from it. And all this was done before

creation, done in Eternity. An elected people redeemed in God's purpose; the death of the Redeemer, complete in God's purpose; the operations of the Spirit, complete in God's purpose. The time comes when the Testament becomes of force. The Saviour died, actually died, but in virtue of that, after the fall the Covenant came into force. Now, says God, this is the Covenant. And this means a second view, that this Covenant, made in Eternity, and absolute, becomes of force in every elected person, because when the day comes for God to put His laws into the mind, this means an experimental religion. An experimental religion. An experimental religion begins in regeneration. God puts His laws into the mind then. Life in the soul, light in the understanding, and a sinner at once begins to know God; to feel God, to know sin, to feel sin, to be condemned. He knows God the moment he is born again. He does not know that he knows Him; he does not realise that he knows Him, but the things of eternity become of weight; they are real; they become real to the man. If a sinner at this stage gets a view of the purity of God, he is ready to say - Where that God is, I shall never be; he feels it. There is an infinite distance of sin between a holy God, and a sinner. That is a very solemn experience, a very true experience. Then the Spirit comes and puts another law into the man's heart, and mind - the law of grace - and that points out this, that there is a way to be saved. That is a great thing. There is a way. There is such a thing as justification. There is such a thing as holiness, or sanctification. And the sinner says, I want justification, I want sanctification, I want forgiveness of my sins. This is the Covenant taking effect, the Spirit bringing it down from heaven into the heart. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, writes this in the heart of a sinner. I will put it there, I will write it there. And this says, a man has nothing to do with it, but to receive it. Very humbling. I do not wonder at men rebelling against election, and against the special operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart, for this is what it means. The sinner is a passive receiver; not an active worker, but a passive receiver, and he says, I have got no more religion than God gives me. How many of you can use Asaph's language - "I was as a beast before Thee". Very strong language to use, but not stronger than the feeling of being as a beast before God. And when this is done, then there is room for the mercy of God. This is the law of grace, this is the law of love, this is the law of mercy, this is the law of salvation, this is

the perfect law of liberty, and it is put into the heart. It is not something floating in the brain, it is not some naked knowledge acquired, but it is a heavenly gift, a heaven-born grace in the sinner's soul, and he knows there is something. This is very beautiful in my view, that God, the Holy Ghost, brings this new Covenant into being in experience. You may not apprehend it; you may have very dim views of the Covenant, and yet have the Covenant in your heart; have the power of it, the goodness of it, the mercy of it, the love of it, and, sooner or later, the liberty of it. Then God takes a sinner by the hand and leads him out of Egypt, spiritual Egypt, Sodom, Babylon. He leads the sinner out of the foreign land and brings him to find a rest in God. "Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee...." And when this is done, the sinner has something to say, and he does something. "Gather my saints together unto Me, those that have made a Covenant with Me by sacrifice." Christ tells us what that is - Except a man deny himself, hate father, and mother, leave house, and land, for My sake, and take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple. That is what the Lord's people are brought to in heart, and spirit, mind and soul, by precious faith. They come to this - nothing but the cross, none but Christ, no fountain but Christ's, no robe but Christ's, no holiness but Christ's; and this is the experience of each one. Before he gets all he wants, he says, all I need is there. And so he says in his heart, farewell to the world, and he is brought by the Holy Ghost to do this - to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and believes that all other things shall be added unto him. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts". Just as God's finger wrote the commandments on the tables of stone, so the Spirit writes the laws of grace, and the Covenant upon the fleshy tables of the hearts of His people, and that makes them the epistles of Christ known and read of all men. You will be sure to have it written upon your hearts if you belong to the Lord. It is very solemn, and it may lead us to self-examination. Not to find out how good we are, how religious we are, what desires we have, but has there been the writing of the finger of the Spirit of God upon the heart? Has divine light shone into our minds, to lead us to God's holy hill, and to His tabernacles? Has the Spirit written the truth concerning the incarnation of Christ, and the obedience of Christ, and the death of Christ, so as to make us

say, there is none but Jesus can do us good. And that has led us to cleave to Him, to follow Him, and to feel nothing worthy the name of good save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is God's work, this is experimental religion as far as I understand it. It brings men to hunger and thirst after God, and when a man is hungry, he would pass sacks of gold to get a piece of bread. And when you are hungry for God, you will pass everything by that may stand in your way, and say, Hinder me not, what I want is a revelation of Christ, a revealed Christ in my soul, dwelling in me the hope of glory. O dear brethren, this is the blessed work of God the Spirit; this is what is written in this epistle, where Paul says, Where a testament is, it is of force after men are dead. And the testament, the Covenant of Grace, became of force, actual force - always in God's heart sufficient - but of actual force when Christ died. And the legacies of this Covenant, this testimony, are wonderful. This blessed testament is full of names, names of elected persons, names of sinners, and Jesus bought them all with His precious blood, and then, having done that, He sends His good Spirit into their hearts to quicken them, and write in their hearts the law of liberty.

And it follows - "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people". God becoming the God of a sinner. "I will be to them a God" Very wonderful when God gathered, in Apostolic days, sinners bought with blood, by the grace of the Spirit, for they were all idolators. The church of the Ephesians was made up of people who had been crying out - "Great is Diana of the Ephesians". The Thessalonians, when the power of God the Holy Ghost came upon them, turned from idols to serve the living and true God. So, whenever grace comes to a sinner, it turns him from the greatest idol, even self; it turns him to serve the living and true God. And why? Because God is his God. I will be their God. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me". The jealous love of God brings His people to this. "Thou shalt have no other gods" The Trinity is the God of the saints. The Father receives them as His sons; Christ receives them as His brethren; the Spirit receives and dwells in them, and guides them into all truth. And this Trinity is the God of the church. Has He been your God at any moment? Was there ever a time when He came to you, when He claimed you, when He blessed you? Is there a place in the earth to which you, in your memory, can go, and do go sometimes, when

you can say, He blessed me there. I was in trouble, and He blessed me. I was homeless, and He took me home to himself. He blessed me there. That was a great thing. It is a great thing for us to be able to say it, He blessed us there. "And I will be to them a God". A great God, a Saviour. "A just God and a Saviour". God who said to Moses, Make a Mercy Seat, and I will meet with thee there, and there will I commune with thee. And this is put into the gospel, and is called the throne of grace, to which we are brought, to which we come, and there God meets us, and there He smiles. He has met me there; He has met some of you there. There He has blessed you. There His Name has been named on you, and there the legacies of Christ's testament have been given to you. A blessed promise, a gracious visitation of love, a sweet sense of divine mercy coming to you, and the forgiveness of sins spoken to you. Legacies in the testament of Christ, in the Covenant of Grace. I will make it with them. He said in the Psalms - "I have made a Covenant with My chosen". "I have laid help upon One that is mighty". My arm shall be with Him. I will establish Him. "The enemy shall not exact upon Him". "I will beat down His foes before His face" (Psalm 89). And all that was Covenant goodness, Covenant mercy with the Son of God. Now He brings this into the heart. "I will be to them a God". He was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and now He is the God of a sinner; takes the sinner up, takes his case up, takes his weakness, takes his ignorance, takes his vanity; takes them all away from him, and gives the sinner Himself, and says, I am thy God. What a great thing. One would stand, as it were, before such mercy, and feel it coming in like doctrine dropping as the rain and speech distilling as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and find it to be like the shining of the sun after rain. This good God. What can a sinner want, what can he need, if he has this? The whole world is God's. Gold, and silver, cattle on a thousand hills, rivers, men, devils, all to serve the church. Blessings are His; sweet mercies are His; and all of them are to come down into the heart and mind. Ah my friends, this is not a picture to be admired; it is a life, it is a voice, it is a power, it is a mercy; it is heaven itself, for substance. "I will be to them a God". And what then? The promise the Father made to Christ - "I will beat down His foes before His face", takes effect upon all His people. God will beat down all your foes. Paul says, of the greatest foe except himself - "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". That was a Covenant

promise to the Son, and it became a Covenant promise in a sinner. A word written in his heart, a word spoken to his soul. And sometimes he can say, If ever God spoke to me, He said such and such a word. Perhaps you have been saying, if ever He spoke to me, He told me that He would guide me with His eye. If ever He spoke to me, one may say, He told me my sins were forgiven. If ever He showed me anything, He showed me the Lord Jesus as "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" and that took effect. You see it is the Covenant being fulfilled in the soul. Covenant blessings. It is doctrine becoming experience; it is God coming down to a sinner, saying, Thus saith the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity, to that man will I look - though heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool - to that man will I look, and with him will I dwell, that is of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word. (Isaiah 57 v 15; 66 v 1 and 2). "I will be to them a God", a good God, a mighty God, a speaking God, a God holding communion with a sinner.

And there is another thing that the Lord, God the Father, in the Covenant said to His Son - "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee" (Isaiah 49 v 8). Now that becomes a word in the heart. It was God's word to His Son, and it becomes God's word in His people. "In an acceptable time", God's time, due time. It is said "in due time". What is "due time"? "An acceptable time". What is "An acceptable time"? the time God has appointed to bless you in His Son, to help you in your troubles, to sustain you under your burdens, to guide you through your difficulties, to beat down your foes before your face, and to supply all your needs. This is the Covenant, and by this we may see how that the Covenant has to do with every bit of true experience. It enters into the whole of a soul's religion, and it thus binds the sinner to God. Peter saw a wonderful thing - a great sheet let down from heaven, knit at the four corners, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Ever so many of those creatures were unclean to Peter, so when the Lord said to Peter - "Rise Peter; kill, and eat", he said - "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean". Then the Covenant came - "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10) Then comes the acceptable time when the Lord delivers a polluted person from his pollution, a guilty person from his guilty

rags, and enlightens blind eyes in the blessed Covenant. And my brethren, our mercy is this, that God has made this Covenant with some of us. You could not deny it rightly, some of you. He has made it, He has come down, and dwelt with you, and your fearful heart has been strengthened, and that word in Isaiah has been made good. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you". (Isaiah 35 v 3 and 4) I am for experimental religion, as you may see, and always have been, I hope, and I hope I shall be to the end, but this is the experience, God making a Covenant with a sinner, coming to him, dealing with him.

"I will be to them a God" to supply all their needs; all of them, no matter of what kind, nor how many; all of them. And very beautifully the Holy Ghost expresses this in the Philippians, where He inspired the Apostle to pledge God to His people. I believe I may use that word "pledge" there, for Paul says - "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4 v 19). Now there is one supply that is very wonderful, a good supply of the Spirit of Christ; a good supply of that Spirit. Nehemiah, recounting in God's ears what had been done by Him, and given by Him, to the people, said that God gave manna for their hunger, water for their thirst, and His good Spirit to teach them. And Christ promises this good Spirit. "He" said Christ, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall take of Mine and show it unto you". "He shall guide you into all truth". Wonderful it is to have this Holy Spirit given as a Covenant blessing; given by the Lord Jesus, whose Spirit He is, and the Spirit of promise. This Holy Spirit keeps alive faith. Faith stands in His power, faith deals with God in His grace. Faith hangs about Christ, cleaves to Christ, and glories in Christ, by the Spirit. Faith stands there. And the Holy Spirit again gives repentance, works it; gives prayer, makes intercession, gives reproofs, which are called "the reproofs of life". Gives tokens for good, is the earnest of the inheritance, and seals the soul unto the day of redemption. All this is in this beautiful word - "And I will be to them a God". I will not let them die for lack of any needed good. I will be with them to bless them, be with them in the furnace, be with them in the flood, be with them in the wilderness, be with them while

they live, be with them when they come to die. The Lord open this full word to you, and to me. It is a full word. I see it; I have no grace, no power, no wisdom to open it fully. I can only give hints, such as I know in my own soul. O, this good Spirit, this Divine Spirit, given as a Covenant blessing to poor sinners.

Then there is another thing. You people of God know what it is not to be able to do the good you would. What it is to be driven to do the evil you would not. That is a very painful experience. But may not it go both ways? O, I have been so glad to notice that. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit". Pride works against humility; discontent works rebellion against God. A haughty spirit works against a humble lying at the throne of grace. Self-fullness works against the fullness of the Lord Jesus. Lust works against holiness. I need not enlarge; you will understand all that. Now it is not alone - O, if it were, what a hell we should soon be in - but there is this - "The Spirit against the flesh". What does He do? He gives power to a sinner to resist. There is no resistance that a child of God ever offers to the workings, and the deceitfulness of the flesh, but by the Holy Spirit. He gives resolution, He gives power, power to the faint. He gives strength to say, I cannot do this. Not, "I will not", but "I cannot" do it. Why? Because of the fear of God. And this is from the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is given by Christ - A Covenant blessing. "I will be to them a God", and I wont let sin be their god. Sin shall not be their conqueror, their master. "And I will be to them a God", to overcome Satan in them, as well as for them. So my brethren, there is a great deal in this. I will be their God in a promise. O, He gives promises. And this does one thing, among others; it makes the Promiser the object of trust. It makes God the object of trust. The sinner trusts in his God, trusts in His word, walks in that Scripture - "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". And one word more before I conclude here. This God, who says - "I will be to them a God" - is their habitation. Very solemn it is to consider how we were turned out of our first habitation, Eden. God expelled us, justly expelled us, and, as it were, bolted the door, and set a flaming sword there, turning every way. Now He says this, I will be their God, their habitation, and no evil shall befall them. The Psalmist says to the saints - "Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee...."

Now if you do not feel God is your habitation, are you feeling after Him, that He may be that to you? To be outside is awful. Never to be inside, is hell. To have God for your habitation, Christ for your shelter, and hiding place, Christ your home. Blessed be His Name, He becomes the sole trust and habitation of His people. They know they cannot ward off pestilence; they know they cannot intercept the arrows that are flying about, but they know One who can do that, and unto Him they run, and make Him both their refuge, and their habitation. What a God we have; O, what a good God we have. I wish we could trust Him more. May the Lord help us

To trust Him endeavour
The work is His Own;
He makes the believer,
And gives him his crown

And may the Lord keep this before you that I have tried, though very feebly, to set before you; this Covenant. A Covenant God, a Covenant Father, a Covenant Redeemer, a Covenant Spirit; the Three One God entering into a Covenant with His people. Not with Christ only - that is first, and, as I said, that is absolute - this is the Covenant made with, made in, the soul of a child of God. Well, when we get this experience we are happy, we are humble, we are content, we are thankful, because this Covenant makes us holy, and therefore it makes us happy.

Now I leave it where it is for the moment. May the Lord follow it up. May He teach us this. I have prayed that He may bring this to you, and bring it to me. It has been somewhat sweet to me this week to think of this Covenant ordered in all things and sure. The first God found fault with; that is, it was not intended to answer all the purposes of God's love, and grace. But now He has given another Covenant that does answer all His purposes, and displays love, and brings, into the hearts of sinners, His laws, and His goodness, and Himself.

AMEN.