

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 3 April 1927

HOSEA 11 verses 8 and 9

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim, mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city"

These two verses exhibit and set before us two very different, infinitely different characters and, if we are taught of God, we, in some measure, know them both. We know one character; I know him well. His vile nature, his foul face, his deformed features, his bitterness, cruelty, filthiness, his condemned state, I know well, and I believe some of you do. You will join with me in saying we hate him, we can unite with the hymn

Self in myself I hate  
'Tis matter of my moan

can run along with Rutherford in the expression I have often mentioned to you - "O that I had not a myself", but we must die to realise that wish. This man is a wicked creature, yet God loves him, calls him His firstborn, is not turned away from loving him by all his idolatrous unfaithfulness, all his wicked ways, pride and haughtiness, and fulness of bread, and idleness of hands, and innumerable provocations. You cannot turn the love of God into hatred. You cannot turn the promise of God away. His immutability is in His love and in His promise. Well, this is one character, Ephraim. And the other, O how glorious He is, that good God and Saviour, that blessed Lord Jesus. O, what a Christ He is. Infinite in His love, in

His obedience, in His merit, in His care, His mercifulness, His faithfulness, as a High Priest. Infinite in His watchfulness; His eyes never slumber nor sleep. Immutable in His Word, His Word of promise, and perhaps it would be difficult, say at this moment, I think, to find a Scripture which more illustrates, opens, illuminates, sets out, spreads abroad, so to speak, the great character, the immutable character, love and goodness of God, than this beautiful text, a text full of shame, full of ignominy, of death, of evil, on the part of Ephraim, but full of God, full of God. May the Lord open your eyes and mine to see it. As I view it, it is a remarkable Scripture. It might easily, by the Lord, be turned into a flame to melt our poor hearts and into a sun to enlighten our dark minds and into a blessed gospel to fill us with joy. I spake a little about Ephraim this morning, proud Ephraim, envying Judah, pleased when the separation of the ten tribes from the two tribes took place, when Samaria, when Shiloh was made the capital of idolatry, when king Jeroboam made Israel to sin. And this Ephraim, do you know him? I believe he is in this chapel. Wicked men, pleased to get away from God, pleased to get away from His service whenever possible, yet in covenant with God, interested in Christ, one with Christ, redeemed by Christ, and so, when the day comes for God no more to manifest his anger, He says, "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger". I will not always chide lest the soul which I have made should fail before Me. We are weary of God often. He is never weary of blessing us. We are straitened in ourselves; our limitations indeed we know something about. We are very apt just to ask a little. He says - "Open thy mouth wide". The immutability of God is in this text, the immutability of His Being. This is essential to God. Any change in God would make Him no God. We are constantly changing and every change is a kind of death. We change from something that we were to something that we were not. Such a change is not possible to Deity. Remove from your minds, as far as possible, every idea of any kind of sort of change and look upon that blessed Being as One who knows not the shadow of a turn, and with whom is no variableness, and do not judge the nature of God by His dealings. These do change; that, never. These are different and under the covenant of works they differ according to the state of subjects of that covenant. Do good, under the covenant of works, and God will bless you. Do your duty, and He will own you; that is, in the covenant of works. His dealings

change in that way. And it is so, with another intention, in the covenant of grace. When the people of God walk untowardly, when they are froward - and who is not - then He says, I will be froward to you. But this is from grace; not in anger, from covenant love. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". The immutability of God is necessary. Perfection only can be where there is immutability. Immutability is His eternity. The eternity of God is a negation of all kind of change. "I am the Lord, I change not". In the Psalms this immutability is set forth where, looking at heaven and seeing it rolled up as a scroll; at the earth and beholding it to pass away into its original nothingness; the Psalmist says - "But Thou art the same; Thy years fail not". This is the God with whom we have to do. And this immutability is in His love; in His love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". No change in it; no possible change in it. If it could change it would cease to be everlasting love. It would have no title to be called immutable, but it is immutably fixed for ever and ever on the objects, unworthy objects in themselves; fixed there, immutably fixed. Whom once He loves He never leaves. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" and that overcomes everything. Rutherford speaks of it thus - "Christ's imperious love". It sweeps out of the way all obstacles; it brooks no rival. Hence that blessed word - I will take the names of the idols out of the land. Perhaps some of you have known that word, that God has been at the pains to take the names of some of your idols out of the land, and you have been glad to be rid of them for the moment. "I am jealous for Zion with a great jealousy". This imperious, this jealous love, with respect to all opposers and all idols, is the tenderest love. "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you", saith the Lord. He is immutable in His glorious Person as the Son of Man and the Son of God, One Person. Christ will never put down His human nature. If He could, if He did, the Church would lack her Head and so she would perish. He took into everlasting union with His divine Person, our nature. O what a Person is Jesus Christ. If you seek the face of God, you seek Jesus Christ. "God has shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Seek ye My face". This is the Person to whom the Spirit of Christ ever leads His people; always directs them to Him; turns their weeping eyes to Him who will wipe all tears from them, and turns their sad hearts to Him who will make them glad with His own gladness,

and turns their guilty consciences to Him whose blood will cleanse them and remove all guilt; and turns their ragged, naked, shamed souls to Him, whose Name is "The Lord our Righteousness". It would be well if we were enabled to fall flat before God and sing His high praises in giving His dearly beloved Son to be incarnate for such wicked people as we are. O, I think I shall sing louder than any of you when I get to heaven, as I hope to get there. Who so much needs a Saviour? Well, what a Saviour we have. O sinner, look, as God the Holy Spirit teaches you your ruin and your need, to this blessed Lord Jesus Christ. We must perish without Him. He is immutable in His Person; hold it fast. There will never be a moment in eternity to come when the eternal Son of God will not wear, possess as His own, our nature and so there never will be a moment when the Church of God will lack a Head, never.

He is immutable in His precious characters. Take one or two of them, exhibiting - each one does - some peculiar perfection of the Lord Jesus, as, for instance, "I am the vine; ye are the branches". This is needful and the point of it is this, that as a branch that receives no sap from the root must be dead and fruitless, so a soul without union to Jesus Christ and receiving life and sap and fructifying power from Him, must always just be a dead thing. But, receiving that from Him, fruitfulness is the effect. You will never bear fruit to the glory of God except by union with the Lord Jesus. And He is always this. When the figure is no longer, when we are in heaven with Him, as many of us hope to be, and there is no figure to instruct us and no need of it, He will still be the vine, that is, the root and fountain of life and of holiness, and of righteousness, and of every good thing. No independence of a creature; no independence in the Church. No, not in heaven. What? I say it again, no independence in heaven. And the proof of it to me is this in the Revelation - I have often named the Scripture to you; it has been a very beautiful word to me - "And the Lamb which is in the midst of them shall lead them to living fountains of water and they shall thirst no more, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes." These living fountains of water must be the glorious emanations of God, the glories of Emmanuel ever coming to refresh and satisfy and satiate and fill with bliss all that innumerable company He has with Him, in the midst of which, He is. Do you love independence? I do. Has God

broken it? Yes, at times. Were you ever glad to be dependent on the Lord Jesus? Yes, if you have received Him. Yea, Newton's blessed spirit has been in us heard

Yet would I glory in the thought  
That I shall owe Thee most

Why, dear friends, what would you do without this fountain, this blessed living, ever living, vine. Well now, that is one thing in which He is immutable, a fountain of life; think of it. One other word, in the next place, He is the husband of the bride; the husband of the bride. There is great spiritual significance in the Word of God. Adam, when Eve was taken to him, said this is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh; she is my wife. "Therefore" - mark this - "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." And because of this marriage union determined in eternity the Son of God left His Father, sojourned here, took her nature, took her sin, took her death. Think of it; He left His bright throne, left His Father's bosom, left holy angels, and became a poor man to make poor men the sons of God and pay the debt His brethren, His wife, owed. No change in this; ever the same. Ah, it is said, come to the marriage of the Lamb. O blessed is the man who is called to the marriage supper of the Lamb to celebrate the union, to complete the union, in answer to prayer that often has been prayed

Lord, make the union closer yet,  
And let the marriage be complete

It will be complete in heaven. Then one house will hold husband and wife, yea one temple, one Sun, one place. Sometimes people long to get there. A touch of God's love, a visit of His face, the witness of His Spirit will make it difficult for you to repress the wish to get home quickly; to sin no more, to go no more out.

Unchangeable, in the next place, in His Word. Yes, His holy, faithful Word. "Thou art Mine". He set a godly seed. Let no man, He said, deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. He made the two one, and they are one that He might have a godly seed. He says to this

people "Thou art Mine". Will He go back from it? "How shall I give thee up Ephraim?" I took thee up into covenant union; I made thee Mine. How shall I give thee up? How shall I make thee as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? cities doomed to destruction and suffering the vengeance of eternal power. How shall I give thee up? How make thee as Admah, as Zeboim? O, my friends, has the Lord ever come to you? Did He ever speak to you? Did He ever let you know that He loved you? "Thou art Mine". O, what a word it is; what a word it is. Poor Micah, he looked on the gods which he had made, and when some came to his house and took away his gods and his priest, he cried out after them - "Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest ..... and what have I more?" (Judges 18 v 24). If you lose the world, some of you, you will lose everything. But Christ has made Himself over to His people and He has said to them - "Thou art Mine". Lord make it clear to us. The Lord give you the witness of His Spirit that you belong to Him. I cannot make you believe it; He can. I am not able to brush away from your minds all your objections of sinfulness and unworthiness and unprofitableness, but He is able to tell you all about it, that He loves you, that He bought you with His blood, and that from Him your fruit must be found. He is able to do it. O, but I have provoked Him. If you have He will tell you of it. Yea, He will light a fire in your conscience and He may light a fire in your circumstances and He may burn much up. You may have built wood, hay and stubble on a good foundation of God's work in your soul and then, if that is so, He will light up all of it and burn it, and solemn it is, very solemn to have a good deal of your religion burned up. O it is very bitter. But He does not burn the soul. Make, if you can, a distinction between God burning up your wood, hay and stubble, and destroying your soul and taking away your living hope. His Word cannot change. "For ever O Lord Thy Word is settled in heaven". "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My Word shall not pass away". If you can say, now I have got it here; if you can say, I believe there was a time when He put His Word into my heart; it will live there. He wrote it with His own finger, spoke it with His own voice, impressed it upon your heart with His own gracious, living power. Can He undo it? He cannot unsay what He has said. "I am faithful". He said "I am the faithful and true witness". O what a treasure that man carries about with him who has the Word of God in his heart. Prize the Bible which you have in your hands, but pray the Lord to speak some of it

into your hearts, that is, in power. Then some day you will have faith to say, He will come again; He is immutable in His Word. Well, what a God you are worshipping when you worship Him who changes not. "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". That is why I am not consumed, I trust. You think of it; the many years I have provoked Him, the unprofitable ministry of my many years here; how I have provoked Him. Nowadays I think of these things more than I used to do and I am covered with shame, but if anybody in the chapel, in all the world, ought to speak well of God, I ought, because He has not broken His promise; He cannot break His promise. It was a gracious spirit of faith that David had once when he was able to go to the Lord and say to Him "Do as Thou hast said". The same spirit Jacob had when in trouble he said - Thou didst say return to thy land, to thy father's house. Thou didst say I will be with thee. Now Lord, a death has come; fulfil Thy word. Hang to His Word; O, hang to His promise given to you. It was given for life; it was given for eternity; it was given for teaching and for comfort. All this is very inviting and I would like, if it were proper, if I could, to dwell on this great theme.

One word more; how immutable must be that blessed purchase that Christ made when He bought the church with His own blood. You might make a purchase and be very glad to get rid of it. Ah, and if anything could make the Lord Jesus repent of having bought a sinner it would be that sinner's untowardness. The Lord does not cleave to us and bring out His faithfulness because we are so believing and so docile and so godly. He looks at a sinner and says I bought him with My blood. Hell must give him up; devils must give him up; world must give him up and he must himself give up himself, and he is brought to do it all. The devil cannot hold a man who is bought by Christ. Now He says "I am God". That is why we are not consumed. "I am God and not man". And in these remarks which I have made - I wish they were stronger and better - but in these remarks which I have made I have tried to set before you this immutable God, unchangeable, knowing no change, nor shadow of a turning. Let faith survey Him, let her look at all her ways since the creation of the world and since the covenant made with Abraham, trace His holy providence, see Him scattering ten tribes, see Him preserving the tribe of Judah until He should come who was promised to come by and in that tribe; see His greatness when here below, and you

will see this "I am God". "I am God and not man". Then, O what a ground for dependence on Him. O what a reason for cleaving to Him. O what a reason for hanging about the cross of Him who gloriously died on the cross, giving His life. My brethren, this is the God we adore. O that I could preach Him as He ought to be preached and that you could hear about Him what He deserves to have said about Him; this blessed Jesus Christ. But you say He has shown Himself angry with me. You needed it; you have deserved it. But what then? "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger". We fear the extreme; it never comes. What good men fear they do not experience in the fulness. "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger". "How shall I deliver thee?" Here are the enemies with open mouth, ready to devour thee. How shall I deliver thee up to them? I will not. Here is a poor sinner, burnt in his conscience, burnt in his religion; more than half of his religion burnt up. Now he says, what will the next step be? What will the Lord's next movement be? Will He make a full end of me? No; He says, No. Ah, that is a beautiful word; O, what a heaven is in it; may the Lord make it out to us as we need it. "I will correct thee in measure", not in anger, lest I bring thee to nothing. O bless God for the measure. He measures out our pains; He measures out our punishment, chastisement, and troubles and afflictions. "I will correct thee in measure", a blessed word. What a sweet word it has been to me, an extreme sinner - "In measure". And Jeremiah saw the need of correction in himself, and so he said, - O Lord, correct me, not in anger; correct me in measure; deal mercifully with me. O, immutable God, deal kindly with me in measure. Now here is a congregation of sinners and in it are saints, loved of God, and bought with His precious blood, and yet what backsliding, wretched creatures we are. The chief of sinners may say that to those who have sinned as he has, what wretched backsliders we are. And when made to know it, what then? We are afraid, greatly afraid. O Lord I have heard Thy voice and was afraid, and well he might be. Trembling took hold of him. Has it taken hold of some of us at times? What will He do? What will the next word be that He will speak? And if ever you have lived for a time under the Lord's rebukes you will wonder what the next word will be. But He says "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger ..... I will not enter into the city". I have gone away from it in My anger and I have come to it in anger and I have destroyed idols. I have spared idolators and I will not enter the

city again to destroy it. That is, I wont destroy My Zion. Then - I want to say this rightly if I might but have wisdom, to say it properly - sin is made to illustrate the love of God. Now nobody will ever take advantage of that who has grace. Every gracious person will follow Erskine in this

Sin for my good shall work and win  
But 'tis not good for me to sin

No; no child of God ever found it good to sin. O the smiting anger of God. O the entrance of His rod. O the piercings of His Word when He rebukes the sinner. Nobody finds it cheap to sin. But He says, though I have spoken against you, I wont execute the fierceness of My anger. "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child?" O, how can he be? Look at his idolatries. Look at his waywardness, at his pride. And I am sure some of you will follow me; how can he be a pleasant child? But he is. "Thou art all fair My love; there is no spot in thee". Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My bowels are kindled within Me; My repentings meet together and I will bless him; I will bless him. If you are half lost you will only want half a Saviour, but if you become utterly lost you will need then, and seek, a whole Saviour, such as is here in these beautiful words which I have had for a text. May the Lord pardon all that has been amiss, bless your precious souls and mine too with yours; open out to us, this great gospel, this glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus.

AMEN.