

SB
519
1358x
Lan P 812

145. 18
19/10/27

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 10 February 1935

HOSEA 14 v 1 and 2

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou
hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you
words, and turn to the LORD: say unto
Him, Take away all iniquity, and
receive us graciously: so will we render
the calves of our lips"

This remarkable book is composed of very solemn and heavy charges of infidelity - the infidelity of an unfaithful wife - with many gracious words dropped in between here and there. The love of God to His people is celebrated in this book most singularly and beautifully. Go, said the Lord to the prophet, love a woman beloved of her friend according to the love of the Lord to Israel. Singularly wonderful that God's love should, by Himself, be thus brought down, so to put it, to the level of an ungodly woman, for this reason, that He loves ungodly people and will save them and make them holy and happy.

This book thus sets forth Jehovah in a wonderful light. All the iniquities, the extreme wickedness of the people could not turn away His love from them and should anyone say, well, that means we can do as we like, live as we list; if you follow this book, if you follow the Scriptures, you will find that the people of God did not sin cheaply. It cost them their liberty; it cost them much. They had stripe upon stripe, burden upon burden, captivity following captivity and constant defeats by their enemies. They were made to know that it was not a cheap, not an easy thing, to sin. God triumphs; "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes." (Hosea 13 v 14)

The first verse of the text is very remarkable. O Israel, thou hast wandered wide; thou hast turned away from Me, thy God; thou

has been a backslider, as a backsliding heifer; thou hast always been doing evil, turning away from God. "O, Israel". What an appeal God makes to His poor, sinning people. If He makes it to you, you will hardly be able to bear it. I remember when He said to me, when I was a backslider in heart, "What have I done unto thee?.....testify against me" (Micah 6 v 3). "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee" (Jeremiah 2 v 31) I could scarcely bear it. If God comes with a sharp rebuke it shakes you, but if He comes with an amazingly loving appeal, it will melt you. "O Israel", backsliding Israel, foolish Israel, unfaithful Israel. What? "Return unto the Lord thy God". Do you hear it? "The Lord thy God". Thou hast forgotten Me; thou hast been rebellious against Me; thou hast been unfaithful; thou hast been forgetful; thou hast turned to vanity; taken a tree, cut it, made an image of part of it; with part of it thou hast made a fire and roasted a roast and worshipped the image. That was the fall; idolatry was the sin of all the sins of Israel, and the sin that, if I might so express it, touched God more than all the others. If you turn to yourself, if yourself is bigger to you than God, if something that you possess is more to you than Himself, you will offend Him by that more than all other things. Mind idolatry; flee idolatry; that offensive thing, the thing that God hates.

"Return". What, will God want, will he ask for, the society of an unfaithful wife? Will He seek the society of men and women who have done evil as they could with both hands? Does this appeal touch any of you? "Return unto the Lord thy God". Kneel before Me, confess to Me, seek My favour. Pour out your hearts and your prayers to Me. Bring your libations and pour them out before Me. "For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity". Fallen? What from? True worship, sincerity. "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity". When thou saidst the Lord, the Lord God, and we are His temple, it was not sincere, it was not true. Now turn and worship Me. "Thou hast fallen". Have you fallen from a warm affection to coldness? Have you fallen from sincerity before God to hypocrisy, wandering after vain things? Have you fallen from prayer to indifference to the throne of grace? Have you fallen from regarding the cross to regarding things that cannot profit you? O what falls some of us have been guilty of; perhaps even

this morning, perhaps before you left your bedrooms, you were guilty. Vain thoughts may have filled your minds; you fell by that. Falling need not be outward; it can be bad inward; in your hearts it can be very bad, yea, worse than any outward conduct it may be. And what are they to do? How shall they come? If the Lord deals with us for backsliding we are ashamed, afraid; we tremble, we are concerned about the reality of our religion; we question matters. Did He say such and such things to us? Did He ever bring us into union with Himself, as we confessed? Did He ever smile on us? Did He ever give us a sense of His love? Were we ever made acquainted, really acquainted, with the Lord Jesus Christ? Some of you will understand me. When God has spoken reprovngly you questioned things very seriously. Then how will you go to God? Have you not felt ashamed, afraid, backward? Have you not had a singular feeling of shyness? Unbelief has wrought in you; you cannot go like this. Well, no man could meet these questions after the flesh; nobody could take away your blushes which God, the Spirit, may make. Nobody can remove the fearfulness and trembling at the Word of God that you feel when reproved by Him. What then? He meets the case. "Take with you words" You have provoked God, this heavenly Father, this brother born for adversity. He says, "Take with you words". Guilt has made you dumb, fear has sealed your lips; "Take with you words", God give you words, heaven-born words. Take to Him. Could you have imagined - naturally no man could have imagined - the kindness and love of God to His poor, sinning people; and these words belong to the Lord's people. "Take with you". Well, they fell upon Jews; first of all preaching the gospel at Jerusalem. They fell upon Isaiah; later they fell upon the Apostles. Every Apostle excepting Judas had these blessed words given to take to God. Thousands of Israel had these words when the Holy Ghost came down on the Day of Pentecost. The first gospel church had these words. Take with you words and go to God. "What shall we do to be saved?" What shall we do? Will God be propitious? Will He smile? Will He bless? Has He any good thing to give to us? Go with God given words, born of sovereign grace, born of compassion in the heart of the Lord Jesus, words that alone the Lord could invent and write and speak.

And what follows these words? Take them, turn to the Lord with them; they are not given to be locked up in your breast. They are

given that you may give them out to God in turning to Him. And say this to Him; these are the words: "Take away all iniquity". What words. God, against whom the iniquity has been done, says, go and ask Him to take all of it away. Dear friends, "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," but He would not keep them in His heart. Therefore, the Apostle says, the Spirit hath revealed them. And this is one of the things revealed - "Take with you words". Ah you will go to the throne of grace when you get words put into your heart; you will go with them. "Take away all iniquity". A bold word for a wretch to utter, to speak into the ear of God. You look at your iniquity; I look at mine. Base thoughts, unbelieving thoughts, wicked thoughts, rebellious thoughts and now guilt, a load on your conscience, pollution covering you. God says, turn to Me. The Holy God? Yes, the Holy God. My friends, the iniquity will stick to you if God remove it not; you will never get rid of it otherwise. And if you die with the guilt of iniquity on you there is no place in heaven for you. Therefore, the Lord says to this people, come to Me, and say to Me, "Take away all iniquity". What does this involve? What does it mean? It means the atonement of Christ; that alone removes iniquity. The blood of Christ alone cleanseth from all sin. If you say you have not sinned you make Him a liar. If you say you do not sin there is no truth in you. But if, by the Holy Spirit's grace, you go and confess your sin, then that will be found by you to be true: God is faithful and just to forgive you your sin and to cleanse you from all iniquity. Here then is a poor man, trembling at God's word, trembling at the sight and under the sense of His own sin. He has rebelled against God; he hates religion; he has hated it; there is something in it that is abhorrent to him. He is convicted of this; he is convinced that if he continues the course in which God has found him then he must be lost for ever and God comes to him and says, turn to Me. O, the infiniteness of this; the infiniteness of love, the love of God. O, the infinite value of the atonement. Christ made an end of sin; He is the Friend of sinners. Born for them, He lived for them, He suffered for them, He groaned for them, He sweat blood in Gethsemane's garden for them, He died on Calvary for them, and now He sends His Spirit to them and says, take these words with you. Will God give you a prayer like this and decline to answer it? Will He put this into your heart and not give you the answer of a good conscience? Never. Take away

all iniquity by the precious blood of Christ. But these people had a conscience of sin when God spoke to them; so have you. If God speaks to you, you have a conscience of sin. It is with you; you feel it, you sink under the burden of it. What shall I do to be saved? is the enquiry, and you sink under the burden of it. What then? The Holy Spirit brings the precious blood of Christ and by it He speaks peace to the soul. He is called the God of peace because He is the God who gives peace to His poor people. He takes guilt from the conscience; you wont die with guilt on your conscience if you are the people of God. You may carry it as an awful burden for many years, deeply concerned about your dying day, about eternity, often asking the question - "How stands the case with thee, my soul?" The guilt is there; your gracious friends try to encourage you, but you say the guilt is on my conscience. You read the Scriptures and the promises and the gospel; you see the brightness and the glory of the gospel; but you say, guilt is on my conscience. You hear the ministry; it tries to encourage you; you say, yes, but guilt is on my conscience. What then? One only thing: "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin" That does the turn. No good deeds can be brought; no good tempers, no pleasing frames can be brought to be a plea before God, but just a sinner, a sinner, who has done iniquity, committed iniquity, and is guilty. God comes to him in that condition. O, I am glad of that, and you will be glad of it whenever you get it, that God comes to you in just that condition. Free grace, sovereign grace, the precious blood of Christ. Therefore, bring no money. "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye,buy wine and milk without money and without price". Let the wicked man forsake his wickedness, but he will never get rid of his iniquity till the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to his conscience, and the Apostle Peter speaks of this blessing. He says: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ....." They knew it; theorising will never help you; naked knowledge will give you no liberty; experience of the precious blood of Christ will do the turn. "Say unto Him" What a bold thing it appears to be. What, says a sinner, I go to God and say to Him, against whom I have sinned, against whom I have committed all iniquity, say to Him, take away what I have done? Take away the guilt

of my bad life, my wicked life, my deceitful life, my desperately wicked heart; take it all away? Yes; and says God, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him". And love comes in the place of it; blood comes to cleanse, love comes to melt, and the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of Christ, reveals the Lord Jesus. And so two things come, come into the heart. First, holiness. Yes; "Holy brethren" says the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews. "Holy brethren". What made them that? Heavenly calling and the blood of Jesus Christ; the Spirit of holiness in them. Then happiness. You can well believe - you will believe - if you have this experience, that happiness seems at an infinite distance from you, as if you never could attain to it. O, but God brings it. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD". (Deuteronomy 33 v 29). Happiness? It does not consist in things here. Happiness? It is God's gift, the gift of His love. You may seek to get happiness out of this life, this world, but you will never succeed. You will have pleasure for a moment in this and in that, but it is only a passing pleasure. Here God brings a solid happiness. We sing

Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where's thy seat, O tell me where,
Learning, pleasure, wealth and fame
All cry out, it is not here.

It is not. Where is it? In God. Where else? In the soul; brought by the Holy Spirit. "I", says the Lord, "will love them freely", as if they had never sinned, as if they had never had pollution, as if they had never had guilt. Nothing like this can be found in the whole of creation; the free, sovereign, eternal love of God fixed on the vilest of men. And when their guilt is removed then they are as if they had not sinned.

"Receive us graciously". Many a time a child of God feels - How will He receive me? If I go to Him, what will He say to me? Have you not felt that? Ashamed, even to kneel before Him; ashamed because you have been so vile in your conduct - I mean your heart conduct. How will He receive you? Listen! "This Man" - this God-Man - "receiveth sinners and eateth with them"; is thus familiar with them. He

upbraideth not. Ah, you may think you forgive a person an injury done to you, but you are, in your heart, ready to upbraid them, and perhaps are doing it in your heart. There is nothing of this in God. It is not in His heart to upbraid a forgiven sinner. It is not in His heart to upbraid an unfaithful wife. You have played the harlot with many lovers; return to Me. It is not in His manner to upbraid. He puts this word into their mouth, into their heart - "Receive us graciously", kindly, lovingly, tenderly. Ah, the father received the prodigal son graciously, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and commanded the best robe to be brought and the shoes to be brought and a ring to be put on his hand, and the fatted calf to be killed that there might be a heavenly merry-making. So God received sinners.

What treatment since he came?

Love tenderly expressed;

What robe is brought to hide his shame?

The best, the very best.

That is reception, the reception that God grants to a coming backslider, to a coming sinner; no frown on His face, no rebuke in His mind; just a smile and a welcome. And this reception is understood; when the sinner comes, God is not silent to him. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". Thou art Mine; I have redeemed thee. O, it is wonderful to get this secret religion, to get this that reconciles you to God, and takes away all the backwardness and shyness and, as He becomes familiar with you, then you become reverently familiar with Him. "Wilt not thou from this time cry, Thou art my Father, the Guide of my youth" And then, like Israel of old, returning from captivity, you are ready to enter into a covenant with Him. Take my heart, Lord; seal it. And then you say in your heart, Lord, I do take Thee; I receive Thee to be my Redeemer, Saviour, Lord, God, Friend, Brother, King, Priest and Prophet. Yes, if I may say so, there is a mutual reception. God receives the sinner graciously and the sinner receives God believingly. His believing heart now is so humbled that he thankfully acknowledges the goodness and kindness and love of God to him.

What next? "So will we render the calves of our lips", meaning

the very best praises we can offer. What is the best that you can offer, that you do offer, when the Lord has done this for you? When He has taken away iniquity, received you graciously and loved you freely and healed all your backsliding, what do you offer Him? "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" You offer yourself; here is my heart. And if God has got your heart He has got all of you.

Here's my heart Lord, take and seal it

And the Apostle Paul prays for the church, that they might be sanctified wholly; spirit, body and soul, everything that you have. Offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the fruit of your lips. You are glad to sing sometimes a hymn of praise; glad to sing praise God. Praise the Father, praise the Son, praise the Holy Ghost. And with this fruit of your lips there will also be the fruit of your lives. The past time of our life, says Peter, may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. You think of it, you know it, those of you who have had this great mercy. Paul says to the Romans: "I beseech you, by the mercies of God which have been given to you, that ye present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." You understand it to be a reasonable service when this comes to you; what would you withhold? You get touched very closely sometimes, when the Lord comes and asks for this, and takes this and that, but when He has reconciled you to Himself, then you learn the truth of that word, that blessed gospel - Christ received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell among them. He will give you Himself.

"So will we render the calves of our lips". Dear friends, the glorious gospel of Christ is, as I apprehend the matter, in this our subject. "God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him"; sent Him to make an end of sin and to bring in everlasting righteousness; sent Him to shed His precious blood and to make room for Himself in the heart by the teaching of the Spirit. The Trinity - you sang of the Trinity this morning and praised the Trinity - the Holy Trinity is concerned in this great matter and may the Lord make this glorious gospel everything to us. The Church has her being in God, has her holiness from God, has her righteousness

from God, has everything that is needed for eternal holiness and happiness in God, and here it is. Sinner, if you belong to God and have gone away from Him, the day is coming, if it is not already with you, when you will hear Him say, turn to Me; you have fallen by your iniquity, now turn to Me, and you have been ashamed. Then He will say, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity" It is a big "all", but He says "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips".

AMEN.