

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 20 July 1921

Text Isaiah 32 v 15

"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high
and the wilderness be a fruitful field
and the fruitful field be counted for a forest"

This chapter opens with a gracious promise of Christ. Hezekiah may be primarily intended but if so, then as a type of Christ. Behold a King shall reign in righteousness. Who is this but Christ. It only belongs to Him to reign absolutely in righteousness. He does it when He justifies a sinner in His precious robe and reigns as King of the saints, as the God of peace. That is the reign that every one who knows his own plague and sore and filthy garments seeks and receives. The flesh is always wrong; it never has taken a right step since the fall; it never will. The old man is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and every child of God knows Paul's conflict. "When I would do good evil is present with me, and how to perform that which is good I find not." There is none righteous, no not one. So the King here is that blessed One of whom it is written "This is the Name wherewith He shall be called the Lord our Righteousness", and true faith reaches after that. As long as he lives his faith is reaching after and grasping and holding and rejoicing in that righteousness. It is not one undisturbed easy kind of thing, but it is a living principle, enduring conflict and hardness, resisting the devil, and reaching forth to that which is before, even the blessed Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness. And this will a good deal distinguish you dear friends. If you are right, if you are under the teaching of God's good Spirit you are after this King's reign. You want Him, seek Him, pray to Him, ask Him to come. That is a good deal of your life, because unrighteousness fills every one of us, corruptions make us sick and faint. We get again and again a lesson in that scripture "That which is born of the flesh is

flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." You cannot make them one. No, and whenever the Holy Spirit moves upon the soul, strengthening and directing faith then Christ is reached after and throughout this chapter this blessed Person reigns over and puts his foot upon sin. But there is a good deal of desolations, a good deal to try people, and that which precedes the text immediately is very solemn. "Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briars, yea upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city, because the palaces shall be forsaken, the multitude of the city shall be left, the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks". This is very solemn and spiritually it represents our fallen nature and the state we may get into from time to time when any sin prevails. Sin's prevalence and God's presence never go together. If any corruption in us prevails God is away as to His comfortable operations and the sun withdraws its shining and the moon her light and thorns and briars which need no cultivation, which are the effect of the curse, come up and cover the place. Some of us have some painful experience of this. Then old nature turning religious will improve things, so it pretends. Yes, look out you who are spiritual for the voices and the influence and the motions of indwelling sin under the pretence of religion. If the devil cannot make you profane then he will make you pious if he can, and you will find when this is the case that you are left to listen to the flesh. You will be trying to improve things and God may let you do it for a time, and you will weary yourself in the fire. You will weary yourself for vanity and nothing better. And you will prove that the only cure for soul trouble, the only remedy for the wilderness and the weeds and the thorns and the briars and the owls and the screech owls and all things that come is in the text. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. You cannot consider in respect of yourselves a more solemn scripture than this "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" My dear friends we may little suspect sometimes how powerful the flesh is, how deceiving, how it exemplifies Jeremiah's testimony by the Holy Ghost "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it" and also that passage in the chapter I read "The natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God". There is that in our nature that ever is turning away from and rejecting and despising and yet that may be covered up and we may think we are going on well until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. This is the Holy Ghost. He is promised.

Now if the Lord will help me I shall speak of a few particular operations of the Spirit, when He is poured upon sinners from on high, and comes, (He is sent here) to a wilderness and to palaces forsaken, and to that which is covered with briars and thorns. The first operation I will mention in his fresh descent and gift is this, He comes as the Spirit of judgment and of burning and that is very trembling and solemn to all who so receive Him, when He comes to judge your flesh again and again, when He comes to show you what is of the flesh in you, when He shows you that your unhumbed heart was a wilderness, when He shows you that your unbelief made a wilderness, that it was a briar and a thorn; when He shows you that your carnal wisdom also was a briar and a thorn. Now His coming as the Spirit of burning and of judgment is not to discover these things only but burn them up. And when He is in you as the Spirit of judgment you judge them to be fleshy, you judge them to be of the flesh, and when you see the ashes of your sins you judge yourselves by that Holy Spirit who is in you as the Spirit of burning and of judgment, and this is very solemn. There you learn a little afresh of that scripture "Flesh and blood", in the deceitful working of your heart's tactic, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." And this judgment by the Holy Spirit wont leave you much religion, but it will never destroy true faith. It will bring that to light. It wont destroy or burn up gracious confidence. It will accompany that confidence, with a good deal of trembling. It wont destroy any word God has ever given you; it wont cry falsehood upon any testimony He has given you, but it will burn up the flesh, and judge the flesh and then you will judge it. And this is very heavy. A good deal of the Spirit's work in a man is to show him that he is a sinner. A good deal of the Spirit's work is to reveal a sinner's emptiness to him, and his unhumbed condition, and his hardness, and his unbelief, and

his vain thoughts. Until He be poured upon us from on high there is no change, no reformation, no alteration. We go on in our own vain ways and we live to self. We sow to the flesh and learn afterwards what it is to reap corruption. And I do entreat your close and prayerful attention to this point - watch when the Lord deals with you, and as you are enabled to watch, I believe you will find that the Spirit of judgment will bring you solemnly to judge a great deal of the flesh and He will burn up these thorns and briars which have grown without any cultivation. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.

Then He graciously is poured upon His people as the Spirit of revelation, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and that is contained in the promise in Zechariah "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced". Then began that mourning that is so beautiful and so acceptable to God "Every family shall mourn apart". Then begins that looking after and reaching forth unto the Lord Jesus. The soul perceives how necessary that burning was, and how true that Spirit of judgment was, and now hope rises afresh, and the soul goes out in fervent longings to the Lord of life and glory, to see Him, to feel Him, to be near Him, to build on Him, to receive his justification, His righteousness, His forgiveness, His peace, His love. Now these are the longings of faith. When the Spirit comes as a Spirit of revelation He will bring good news from a far country. He will give you such views of Christ as shall attract you, and shall make you believe what you were singing

Then hail, ye happy mourners,
Ye will at last be winners,
By Jesus' blood, the righteous God
Now reconciles poor sinners

And then we believe we can never mourn too much and understand what a union the Spirit makes between mourning and hope, between mourning and rejoicing. Then we see the beauty of going forth weeping, believing that we shall return with joy bringing our

sheaves with us. You will never be better without this my friends. You will never get rid of a weed, a briar, a thorn, without this Spirit of judgment and burning, and you will never rise in sweet, fresh hope and go out in humble confidence without this Holy Spirit. The author of redemption is Christ on the cross and the applier of redemption is the Holy Ghost sent from heaven, and the application of redemption begins when that promise begins to be fulfilled "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" You will look upon your ashes, and now you will see Him who is sent to give beauty for ashes. You have smarted and felt ready to die under the new discoveries of sin, but now you will have the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The glorious gospel brings good news to those who have had the evil tidings spoken in their hearts of their weeds and briars and thorns and thistles. He is sent to bring good news from a far country. He brings it by revelation of Jesus Christ. Until He is poured upon us from on high we do not get this; we cannot get this. But He is poured upon us from on high as the Spirit then of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Now there is one thing necessary for this. It is a very painful thing namely a knowledge of our necessity. It is like an empty place being made, and the more you are emptied the better it will be, and the larger the place for Jesus Christ. This I am not speaking of as the beginning. Many have left that far behind as to years, but this gracious work of the pouring out of the Spirit from on high is from time to time all through. It is astonishing to see, at least it is to me sometimes, how the weeds grow, how the thorns and briars flourish, what work I have given the Lord to do. Do you follow me any of you? What kindness and love He has shown in doing the work. What delight He has in honouring Christ. O yes, when he has made an empty place, a black and charred piece of ground, and you look with grief upon the ashes that the fire has left, then He comes with this precious Christ, and reveals Him. Perhaps you have wondered sometimes under His teaching of you as to your ruin how you could ever venture near again. You could not leave His throne but how to get near to it you knew not, until He gives you an understanding in that scripture, I mean an understanding by faith - "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the

Holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil that is to say His flesh. And having an High Priest over the house of God let us draw near." What, one so black? One who mourns looking upon what has been burnt up? May such a sinner come near? Yes, let us draw near. Why? "If we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" Then the Spirit fulfils the promise that Christ made concerning Him "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". There is no cure but this dear friends. You will never know Christ, never get to the Father without this. This new and living way is shown to you by the Spirit. He will, for that purpose, be poured upon you from on high. Then when this is done it is very wonderful to the soul in whom it is done and very blessed to perceive the liberty that he has before and with God. O if you have been excluded for a time and felt you could not pray, and feared the Lord would never let you pray again and feared perhaps you would go on in darkness all your days, was it not sweet to get a new opening, a fresh access, a liberty to take everything to Him, all your fears, all the troubles you have, and the fears arising out of the troubles and about them, all the confusion of your mind, and the weakness of your faith, and feel a strong cry "Lord increase my faith". Give my straitened bosom room to credit what My Saviour saith. Increase my faith that my hope may be brighter, and my confidence stronger and yet more trembling. Increase my faith that I may reach after the Infinite, even God Himself, in that way in which He may be known and possessed and enjoyed. This is the cure for your wilderness dear friends. Do not you try to make it a garden yourself. If you do you will get disappointment as your wages. Do not set to and say I will not do this again, or I will overcome this. Do not do it. Leave that to the Arminians. The Lord give us grace to go in our helplessness, to go with the ashes and the black, burnt places, to go with the trouble of the fear and the weakness that we have got, to go in the new and living way unto Him with these things. He who would be better before he goes will never go unless God comes to him to make him sick, and as the Spirit of judgment to burn up his confidence in himself.

Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high as a Spirit of sealing. When He reveals Christ what a great thing He does. When you say now I do not think, I do not guess, I do not imagine; at this moment you can say I know. You can join with the Apostle in your humbleness of mind and say I know that the Son of God is come and hath given me an understanding that I should know Him that is true and I am in Him that is true even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. And does not that make you grieve for the grief you have given Him; does not it make you grieve that ever you departed from the simplicity of the gospel to the vain jangling of your own nature? O it fills you with sorrow and the sorrow does not displace the joy. They go together. Well, a sinner may repent and sing, rejoice and be ashamed. I am glad that I know a little of the union of these two graces, sorrow and joy, shame and grief and pain and hope and healing and mercy and love; they mix together well in our wilderness state, when we have the Holy Ghost. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high; then I say we know. He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Then He comes to seal a person and the sealing He has expressed in Solomon's Song, a very beautiful and striking passage, when seen and felt, in the light and life of the Spirit - A garden inclosed is My sister a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Now as I have said to you before in the past, a spring shut up does not mean that you are shut up and cannot come forth. It does not mean that prayer is shut up and faith shut up and all the graces of the Spirit imprisoned. No, it means that the Lord has come and taken possession of you as the owner of a vineyard, of a garden comes and seals his own spring, and does not allow every stranger to come and use it. No, he seals it, and draws just as He will for Himself and His garden. That is what is there intended. And O when the Spirit comes and seals you, giving some gracious promise, some wonderful touch, yea operation and clear manifestation of the love of God to your soul, of the death of Christ ^{for} your sins, of the ascension of Christ into heaven for you, and His intercession for you there; when He shows you these things and your interest in them, and then says as it were all this is yours, you are sealed, and for the time you are shut up. Thou shall be for Me alone and not another. Then is fulfilled

that promise to the mountain of Israel, "Fear not O land, the Lord will do great things for thee. Thou shalt be tilled and sown" You are for the Lord. You feel then with the Apostle "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again." The Spirit does this. He comes to seal a sinner up unto the day of redemption. And at a time like this especially if you are old and grey headed, but at any time of your life, when you get this, you will be very glad to go home. O to get quickly through this life. The very thing that is part of the curse, even the death of the body, is seen by faith to be a blessing to the soul, for then, when the soul is absent from the body and present with the Lord, it is filled with bliss and glory. It is far from a world of grief and sin, with God eternally shut in. The Spirit comes as a Spirit of power giving power to a sinner to believe and love and hope and follow and praise the Lord, to sing with the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless His Holy Name." A Spirit of power to cast all things on the Lord, to walk in that scripture "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind by Jesus Christ." It is the Spirit of separation. Said God to Moses and Moses to Pharaoh "Let My people go that they may serve Me" and when the Holy Spirit comes as a Spirit of separation you are let go. That lust has to let you go; that proud spirit has to let you go; that hardness, that ingratitude, that over carefulness, that drunkenness and surfeiting of care, have to let you go. All of them have to let you go, and you go into the wilderness after your Lord. As Paul says to the Hebrews "Let us go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach" and the high praises of God are in the mouth of a person to whom the Spirit is thus given. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. My dear friends, an individual child of God gets his soul cure this way, and only this way. The church of God, a singular church, and the whole church must have the cure, just this way, no other. Why, people may in a church have plenty of trouble; there may come

differences and quarelling. Mercifully we have not such here; God grant that we may not have, but there may come such things and death and barrenness and a dead ministry and the letter, and all that may come and cover a church like weeds and briars and thorns and thistles cover a field. There is no cure, one may say. Well we must alter this, but they will never do it. Discipline is right, but it wont bring this cure. No, God must give the Holy Spirit, must give, and when He does He will give a living testimony. He will burn up the thorns and briars in the wilderness; He will plough the field up; He will be a Spirit of judgment in the church and of burning. He will fill the pulpit with life and unction and the people's souls will be made lively. There is no cure but this for us. Our present low condition as a body of people will never be cured but by this. O you may think, and people may think, well we must do this and we must do that. Yes and it is just the same as Israel saying to Samuel "Make us a king". What said God of it "They have rejected Me". It is what Hosea said "They returned but not to the Most High". When Ephraim saw his wound what did he do? He went to king Jareb. not to the Lord. When Asa's feet were diseased what did he do? He went to physicians. He knew God; he had had many evidences of God's favour; he was a good man, but he was left, and he went to physicians, and that is what men do today. It is what I am disposed to do, what you are disposed to do. May the Lord keep us from it. May the Holy Ghost come to the church of God and to those churches we are associated with. That will cure us my friends. I am sure there is no other remedy. The wilderness will be a wilderness and the thorns will grow and the briars will increase and cover the whole land until that day that God has designed to pour out upon us the Spirit from on high.

Then look at the effect - "and the wilderness be a fruitful field" That heart that was demented for a time by desolating unbelief, that was unhumbed for a time, that grew stiff in rebellion and stubbornness for a time, that forsook the ordinances of His God for a time, and that turned his back on the Son of God on the cross for a time, that wilderness shall become a fruitful field. And what hope this gives to sinners who are led by the Holy Ghost to see it, what hope. You may dig and

delve but you wont get fruit, but when the Spirit comes and burns and then sends showers of blessing the wilderness is a fruitful field. There is one tree in that fruitful field that will attract the soul- "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Yes, Jesus Christ will come, the tree of life Yes, and through this fruitful field there will be a blessed stream. "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" and what is that stream but the river. From the river of the water of life, the pure river, the stream of grace, of love divine, of mercy, of pardon of communication from heaven; the stream of the scripture in some holy promise; the stream of some doctrine of grace expressed and opened and manifested to the sinner; this, this will be running through the fruitful field. The graces flourish, hope and love and truth, and peace and humility and zeal and jealousy, these all flourish. And the fruitful field be counted for a forest, for an extension, when God begins to mightily work. And when he worked on the day of Pentecost and in Apostolic days, O what fruitful fields there were, and what extensions there were. Then the Thessalonians were called from idols to serve the living God; the Ephesians were called from worshipping Diana to know Jesus Christ and worship Him; the Colossians were called; the dispersed were blessed. All this is intended here. The fruitful field shall be counted for a forest. I wish we may get the extension in our own souls, and if it please God live to see better days. But may we carry this in our hearts through the Spirit, the only way of this coming to pass is by having the Spirit poured upon us from on high.

AMEN.