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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 13 April 1927

ISAIAH 42 v 6 and 7

"I the LORD have called Thee in righteousness,
and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and
give Thee for a Covenant of the people, for a
light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to
bring out the prisoners from the prison, and
them that sit in darkness out of the prison house"

These gracious and great words are addressed to the Lord Jesus by His Father. Christ is the Servant of the first verse of this chapter to whom attention is called. "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles". Speaking of His being called to this great work, Christ says - "And now the LORD God and His Spirit hath sent Me". So there is an amazingly glorious concurrence in the Trinity with respect to the sending of the Lord Jesus. "And in this is manifest the love of God toward us in that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." This evangelical prophet, as Isaiah has been well termed, was inspired to speak very distinctly, very graciously, and very gloriously of the Person and the work of Christ. You will remember that in quite an early chapter in this Book it is written - "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given" That is Christ, the Man Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God in union with Him. "And His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace; and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." And this is the victory that He is here said to have. "He shall send forth judgement - or victory - to the Gentiles". This is the Person of whom we read in a chapter a little further on where God says to Him - "In an acceptable time have I heard Thee, in a day of salvation, and I will keep Thee and preserve Thee". This is the Man Christ Jesus. He was kept when He was a child, preserved by God who told Joseph to flee with the young child and His mother into Egypt. Thence God called Him, saying, according

to Matthew, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son". And Matthew, if there were any doubt about the words I have read for a text belonging to Christ, Matthew settles the question at once by quoting this word and saying - "As it is written, Behold My Servant, Mine Elect" and then again "In Him shall the Gentiles trust". Of this blessed Person, this prophet Isaiah in another chapter says - "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of counsel and of might, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." What a Person then is the Person of Christ, and if we are favoured to know, receive and love Him, cleave to Him and, by the Holy Ghost, call Him Lord - and no man can call Him Lord but by the Holy Ghost - then we shall need eternity to thank God for such a gift, and thank Him for making that gift known to us. The substance of all right preaching is that that the Apostle Paul sets forth as being His own, his own determination. "I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified". And if I might turn aside for a moment and say to you that I wish God may make you critical hearers - not critical with respect to my preaching a sermon for, as I have more than once said to you if you expect me to preach a sermon you will be disappointed - but critical with respect to the gospel I endeavour to preach and if He is not the foundation of it and the builder of the building and the bringer forth of the topstone with shouting crying Grace, Grace unto it, then you have good reason to suspect that I am not in my right place. A pulpit is only for Jesus Christ, and when I say that, it is not to the exclusion of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, for they are both in Him. I in the Father, the Father in Me. And the Holy Ghost was given to Him and dwelt in Him without measure. Here the Father speaks to Him with all the majesty of His universal creating and arranging power. "Thus saith God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spreadeth forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the LORD have called Thee". Men that walk in the earth, sinful men - "There is no man that doeth good and sinneth not" - they are all lost men - we are - utterly lost in and by the fall. And if God will have any of these men walking in the earth saved and ultimately be with Him in heaven, He must devise some way, a way of His own, in which He can honourably, righteously, save them. Righteousness is in salvation my friends. The Apostle Paul,

saying that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, gave two reasons for that. First, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and second that therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. This brethren, as perceived by faith and received into the heart will say to you, your changes, ins and outs, many trials, difficulties, your barrenness, your many sad and grievous departures from the Lord, are all met in and by this gospel. That the blessed Covenant of Grace is not, cannot be, affected with any adverse influence on you, by any change, and all the changes you are subjected to. God subjected the new creation to vanity not willingly but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. And because the Lord would save some of the men, the people that walk upon the earth, He sent a Saviour, and a great One, and that Saviour must be equal to the work. He must be capable of it; He must be competent to bear sin; He must have grace and love in His heart for sinners. He must have grace given to Him for sinners before the world began. And all this we are told was done and in the text the Lord said He called this, His Son, to be a Covenant to the people. Every blessing of the gospel is inside the Covenant. The atonement is in the Covenant; justification and no remembrance of sin are both of them in the Covenant. Perseverance to the end is in the Covenant, and every good thing that the saints are to experience in this life and the bliss of eternity, they find to be within the bond of the Covenant, the new Covenant, the Covenant which we ordinarily call the Covenant of Grace as distinguished from, and different from, the Covenant of Works. "I have called Thee in righteousness" or for a righteous purpose, which puts salvation on a wonderful foundation, a foundation of righteousness, and may the Lord help you, and help me very closely, to observe the bottom, the foundation of Christ's Person and work and of salvation. It is righteousness. We need mercy, and it is mercy indeed that must save us, but mercy has a good bottom. Righteousness and truth, mercy and peace, have met together in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is good to see this grand truth and to receive it by faith into the heart. No perfection in God paid a price with respect to another perfection. Each perfection in God received glory in and from the Person and work of Christ. Mercy does not flow at the expense of truth; that is a great thing to notice. Righteousness and peace kiss each other. They are equal, equally glorified. They shine with equal splendour in the Person of

the Lord Jesus Christ. God, in His sovereign love, called His Son. I have called Thee for a righteous purpose. I have given Thee for a Covenant to raise up the people and to bring forth the prisoner out of the prison. Well, what an amazing God we have to deal with. What amazing mercy God manifests in dealing with us. See what a ground you have, poor, dependent, depending sinner, to stand on. What a God you have to look to, a righteous Saviour - "A just God and a Saviour". Righteousness to full perfection is here in the calling of God. "I have called Thee in righteousness". We are told that God called His Son to be a Priest, a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The Man Christ Jesus did not take on Himself that honour. No man taketh that honour of Priesthood unto Himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron. Aaron was called to be a priest and the ante-type of Aaron is Christ, and Christ is the ante-type of the call as well as the office to which He was called. This faith perceives and sees a glory in it. Jesus did not obtrude Himself uncalled into that great office. His Father's love was in the call; His Father's grace was in the call, for He gave grace to Christ for His people; He gave Him grace before the foundation of the world. O my friends, if the Holy Ghost but open this great truth and should magnify it in our hearts, it would be a solid thing to look to and rest on, the sovereign love of God flowing in the channel of the election of His dearly beloved Son to be the Man Christ Jesus. God elected Him to this great thing. "Behold My Servant whom I uphold; Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth." Watts sang "Christ be My first elect" (73). So great was this love of God to His people, that He would call to be a Priest for them His only begotten Son, decreeing at the same time that that Son should become incarnate; should be born of the virgin Mary. And the purpose for which He was called was this, to minister in things pertaining to God. Just let us, as the Lord may help us, hang to this for a little, that Christ was called to be a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Now Paul tells us in the Hebrews what the office of a Priest is. It is this, that he should serve in things pertaining to God. And that gives the true and proper central thought of the nature, the office, the work of a priest. He had first of all to minister in the things that pertained to God. Things that pertained to God were the harmonising of all His perfections in the salvation of sinners, that every attribute of Deity should be equally honoured in the salvation of the vilest of all creatures.

Ministering in the things - serving, the word is - pertaining to God, meant that there must be an offering. An offering, a sacrifice, meant there must be an altar. An altar means also that there shall be a priest to serve at that altar and this was the work to which Jesus Christ was called. O what a work. He must have His face to God, His heart to God; His service was to God. He was to serve in the things that pertained to Him, and He did it. O, honours rest on Him and praises be given to Him and crowns be put on His glorious Head; He did the service. "He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many". He did it. Did you ever see it? Did you ever gaze on that Priest with, as it would seem, His back to the people; with His face to God, because God was first in His work. O did you ever see Him offering up a sacrifice, that sacrifice being Himself, for He, through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. If you ever saw Him you will never really forget the sight. It may be lost sight of, but there it will be in your heart, and it will come back again when you are renewed from time to time in the spirit of your mind by the Holy Ghost. Ah it is a wonderful thing to see Jesus serving His Father, offering Himself. He could offer nothing better; He would offer nothing less. He said in the Psalm, as it is written, He said to His Father - "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offering for sin Thou didst not desire". He had ordained those offerings to be typical, but to satisfy justice, to honour the law, to please God and to save sinners, God never desired, never designed, such sacrifices. Then said He, "Lo I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will O My God. Yea, Thy law is within My heart." And the Apostle Paul, quoting that Scripture translates it thus. "A body hast Thou prepared or fitted Me". The Son looked on the virgin Mary and saw that holy thing begotten in her by the Holy Ghost and He said to His Father, Thou hast prepared a body for Me and He came and took up His holy and glorious abode in that body. God the Father said He was to come, God the Holy Ghost prepared the body, the temple as Christ called it (as He said, destroy this temple). God, I say, the Father decreed, God the Holy Ghost wrought the great miracle, and the Son came and He thus tabernacled and He still tabernacles with men. Now I have dwelt a little on this; it is a mystery. It is our mercy and it is the bottom and ground of our hope, the calling by the Father of His Son to be a High Priest after the order of Melechisedec and the serving of the

Son. "Behold My Servant" says the Father. He will call attention to Him. "Behold My Servant", the equal of the Father, the Father's Servant. the Son, the Servant, the Man, the child of the virgin, the Father's Servant.

How willing was Jesus to die
That we wretched sinners might live
The life they could not take away
How willing was Jesus to give

and therein is the serving of our High Priest in things pertaining to God. God looked to Him for satisfaction and He rendered it to His Father. He always did those things that pleased His Father. Would you find access to God? This is the way. Would you have acceptance with God? This is the Person in whom you must find it. Would you be reconciled to God? It must be in the Person, in the death, of the Lord Jesus. Would you be clothed in a divine robe so as to be justified? It must be this - "This is the Name wherewith He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness". Would you be sanctified? "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His Own blood, suffered without the gate". And the whole of this is set here. "I have called Thee". I have called Thee, My Son, My Servant. Well, dear friends, if I were to sit down now and God helped you to take hold of the truth, without being offended at the poverty of my expressing it, you would have quite enough to go home with and meditate upon. A Person called to serve His Father; a Person called to serve His Father in things that pertained to the Divine nature, to serve in things that pertained to the Divine law, to magnify it and make it honourable; to serve His Father in all those things that pertain to the redemption of the Church, to the adoption of sinners as children unto God. He served in all those things. What a service He rendered. We are unprofitable servants, but all the profit that God would have any child of His bear shall come from Him who served His Father perfectly. It shall come that way and no other way. Said the Lord, by Hosea, - "I am a green fir tree, from Me is thy fruit found." Look then, O barren soul, look to that good and fat root, look to Him who said - "I am the true Vine". "I am the true Vine". Other vines are all empty vines; they bring forth fruit unto themselves, but this true Vine, Jesus Christ, has everything you can need. God called Him to this. As I see it - I would

like daily to feel it - the righteousness of this is for the eternal glory of God. "I have called Thee in righteousness" It is, I think, Dr Owen who says that the people of God could not receive a salvation that did not magnify the eternal God, and it is true. That is just the spirit of the word which I seem to remember as having read; it is true. Could you, with an enlightened, honest conscience, could you, with the life of God in your souls, receive and hold anything that did not honour the Trinity; that did not magnify every attribute of God? Why, have not we felt in early days of conviction, that it was impossible for God to save us. We were ignorant of the gospel. Did not we feel it was impossible for Him to save us? What was the ground of that feeling? The character of God as revealed to us in the law. I distinctly remember that in my own case. God's character is glorious, and when it is revealed in a sinner's guilty conscience, that sinner may say many and many a time, not knowing the Lord Jesus, I cannot imagine how God can honourably save me. Therefore, may we thank and bless this great God who says here to His only begotten Son - "I have called Thee in righteousness".

Now He promised Him something. "And will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee" The Man Christ Jesus needed this; He needed this. It is conceivable perhaps that His Deity could have sustained, might have sustained Him. Ability was there, but the Covenant arrangement was not that. God's arrangement in the Covenant was that the Man Christ Jesus should be supported by the Lord. You may say, but what bearing has that on us? I will tell you. The bearing it has on the Lord's people is this - "He is able to succour them that are tempted in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted". A sympathising High Priest, a merciful and faithful High Priest. And as His Father here says - "I will hold Thine hand", now He thy Saviour, poor, tempted sinner, says I will hold thy hand, and He does hold the hand of a poor, tempted, tried child of God. And as His Father kept Him, so He will keep thee. He kept Him when an infant and said to Joseph - "Take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt". God covered Jesus then. He will cover you by two things. He will cover you by the covering which He creates upon Mount Zion. He will cover you by the teaching and grace of His Spirit. He will cover you from the enemy's attacks sometimes by some providence. Some afflicting providence may keep you from destroying yourself, may keep you from being

destroyed by the devil. Yes, we need covering and One who went before us who is called our Forerunner needed it and received it. I will hold Thine hand; I will keep Thee. As it is in another chapter, I will preserve Thee. Jesus spent whole nights in prayer

Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervour of His prayer

and He was heard in that He feared, and God saved Him. In that He feared and cried mightily with strong cries and tears, the Lord heard Him. I knew, said Christ on one occasion to His Father, that Thou always hearest Me. And God will hear you when you pray through His dear Son Jesus Christ. When you go to the throne of God's heavenly grace and mention the Name and the work, the blood and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, He will hear you. He heareth not sinners who, like the Pharisee, pray and give God thanks for what was not existing, but when sinners pray, sinners who are high in His esteem, when they pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus, they are heard. We know it; some of us can say we know it. He has heard our prayers. He has caused us to come near His holy throne. Jesus went there first. He is that Shepherd who engaged His heart to approach unto God, and He made that holy and wonderful approach that was typified by the High Priest entering once a year into the Holy of Holies. He went to His Father. And when you go, and when I go, needy and naked and undone and weak, and when we say with the hymnwriter

Marks of grace I cannot show
All polluted is my breast
Yet I weary am I know
And the weary long for rest

then we are heard. And the way of approach is set forth in that blessed 80 Psalm where the Church in her desolate condition says, "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee. Quicken us and we will call upon Thy Name." When you pray, look at this, look at the way, at the Name, at the Person whom you mention and plead before God. If you mention Christ you cannot be too guilty, too polluted, too distant from Him, too weak. You cannot be too bad and too lost. But if you mention yourself, if you mention your

goodness, and your fasting and your liberality, then you will go home more condemned. It is the publican that goes home justified. It is the sinner for whom Jesus served His Father who gets the blessing. It is the man who looks to the Priest and the Priestly offering and looks tremblingly at the Priest entering into the Holy of Holies who finds the sound of the bells and gets the fruit of the pomegranate on the garment of the High Priest. The whole comes to this, none but Jesus, none but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good, and that will go on to the end.

"And give Thee for a Covenant of the people". There are several Covenants mentioned in the Scripture but there are two Covenants that stand out as different from all the others. A man's Covenant is an important thing and the Apostle in the Galatians says if it be but a man's Covenant, if it be well testified, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now there are two Covenants that have been confirmed, that can never be increased, never decrease, in any of their conditions or settlements. The first is the Covenant of Works. That is an important Covenant under which all are born into the world. It has the authority today that it had when Adam fell, just the same. No man can disannul it; no man can avoid its authority. There it is; we are under it by nature; it is written in our hearts. The Gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts. Solemn truth this and if any sinner in this chapel now dies under that Covenant he will have to meet it. He will see that he never fulfilled it; he will see that he broke it from beginning to end, and then what was said to Adam will be said to him in awful and in eternal misery. "Dying thou shalt die". And that second death will hold him for ever and ever. And the other Covenant is the Covenant of Grace, the new Covenant which God said should not be broken as the first Covenant was broken. That is the new Covenant and here are its terms - "I will put My law into their mind and write it in their heart and they shall be to Me a people and I will be to them a God. They shall no more say every man to his neighbour and his brother, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more". My friends if we are wrapped up in that Covenant, no death, no eternal ruin can come near to us; no devil shall destroy us; no sin shall ruin us. Now the bond and the binder and the sealer of this Covenant

is Jesus Christ. "I have given Thee for a Covenant", to open it, to make it good, to fulfil its every condition and to seal it, so that the blessings of it shall come freely flowing as rainfall from heaven into the hearts of the unworthiest of men. What a Covenant! And see the bond of it, see the sealer of it, look at the sealer of it. He sealed it with His blood. God gave Him, God sent Him, God spoke to Him, God laid things on Him, laid a service on Him, laid death on Him as a commandment. He commanded Him to die. His Father laid this on Him. Ah if He had failed, eternal ruin would have swallowed us all up but he could not fail. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" Nothing could put Christ out. We are put out in a minute, out of right things and right ways and right thoughts and right desires. Why, sin diverts us constantly. You come to a certain place; here are two ways; which are you going to take? Nature examines them as far as it can and says this is the easier, this is the broader of the two; I will go that way. Faith examines these two ways and says, this is the narrower, this is the more difficult, but I see One who went in this way first of all, a suffering Saviour. This is the way my heart chooses; Lord help me. The Covenant embraces those people. The Covenant is sealed by the Lord Jesus and holds fast all who are within the bond of it. I have given Him for a Commander and a Leader and a Covenant to the people. Yes, and if He be set before our faith we shall never want a Guide, never lack One to go before us. The Good Shepherd goeth before His sheep. When He putteth them out He goeth before them. What a Saviour He is. O, if I could only know, love and preach Him better, I would be glad. What a Christ we have, what a Saviour. A Covenant unbreakable because made between and by the Eternal Trinity. I, says the Father, have given Him for a Covenant. Says the Son, I have come to do Thy will, O My God. And says the Spirit, I am a witness to that. Hence that great Scripture in the 1st Epistle of John - "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," and you will find that record within the Covenant. And if you find your name in it, in the Lamb's Book of Life, you will find eternal blessedness. Some people's names are written in it. Some of us hope that our names are there. What a hope; O what a hope; as if the Lord Jesus took our names and our persons out of the old, the broken Covenant, and put and wrote them in the new Covenant. These are Mine He said and I wrote their names in My Book of Life, the Lamb's Book of Life.

I have given Him. What a gift. He came from the Father's bosom to take into union with Himself the body that was begotten of the Spirit of God for Him. When you see the Saviour tabernacling with men and find Him tabernacling with you, you have the substance of the Covenant in your heart and the substance of every blessing that your soul can need and desire and enjoy throughout eternity.

Well now, may the Lord lead us into this. It is a full gospel, a full Christ for an empty sinner, a mighty Saviour for a worm of earth. a just God and a Saviour for an unjust Church to make her righteous, wholly righteous before God. And when all this comes home then there is an opening of the blind eyes, there is a bringing out of the prison the prisoners. And they that sit in darkness they see and they walk in the light of life.

AMEN.