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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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ISAIAH 42 v 8

"I am the Lord, that is My Name, and My glory
will I not give to another, neither My
praise to graven images"

God speaks in this chapter in the first place calling attention to His Servant. His Servant is His equal in nature, the Eternal Son. His Servant is subordinate to Him in the Covenant, hence this word - "Behold My Servant whom I uphold, Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth" I have put My Spirit upon Him without measure. The Holy Ghost was given to the Lord Jesus, and it is prophesied of Him what He shall do. "He shall not cry nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the street". Something different this from present day religion. "A bruised reed shall He not break". Some beast has trodden upon it and bruised it; sin has put its heavy heel upon it and bruised it; A compassionate Saviour wont break it. Pity, love, power, unite to set this bruised reed up. The smoking flax of spiritual desire, mixed with a good deal of flesh, smoking, emitting an unpleasant smell; we would perhaps extinguish it; He trims it, He does not quench it. He shall not fail in His work to save His people who have been given to Him to save. He shall not be broken, not discouraged, by all that comes against Him. Hell was against Him, men were against Him, the law came to Him as an enemy as it were, demanding satisfaction, and though the demands of the law were very, very heavy - nothing less than perfection was demanded, and could be received - even that did not discourage or break Him. Having spoken thus of His Son, His Servant, now God speaks of Himself. "Thus saith God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread 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 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." Declaring His omnipotence to His Son, He says to His Son, I, who have created the heavens, and stretched them out; I who spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it, who giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein, I know that Thou wilt have difficulties, a burden that would press into perdition all but Thyself. "I will hold Thine hand". These promises made to Christ were fulfilled to Him in His experience. Then comes the text - "I am the LORD". This truth is an eternal truth. It needs not, it never will receive, any commendation. Modernism may say, does say, that in the light of science, of scientific research, and so on, God must be newly represented. This Book tells us of the Eternal God. How many of us believe that? How many of us believe that we must stand before this God? How many of us are concerned how we shall stand before Him? Do we know, do we feel, do we confess, that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; that except our righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we can in no case enter into the kingdom? Do we seek another righteousness therefore? "I am the LORD" and unutterably terrible it will be for men who take away from the Bible representation of God, and who, contrary to the Bible representation of Him, add to Him. "I am the LORD, I change not". As He cannot change in His nature, so neither can He change in His mind, His purposes. Every change is a kind of death. We change today, we change tomorrow, in some things, and our change is a kind of death. We die to something we did, or something we planned, or something we said, and live to something else. God cannot change. Think of it. Do you love Him? Do you love Him for what He is? Would you have Him other than He is? Would you have His omniscience reduced to a limit, that you may sin without God seeing you? Would you have His justice reduced so that you might escape the punishment it must inflict on sinners? Would you have His omnipotence reduced so that you need not be crushed by the awful stroke of it? united as it is to infinite justice. I wish that as a church and congregation God might be known and felt, revered, loved, and trusted, as He has revealed Himself in holy Scripture in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is jealous. Do not forget that God is jealous; jealous of Himself, of His honour, and glory. Jealous of the love of His people. In speaking to you, as enabled, about this glorious One, I will speak first of God as the Creator - for He thus speaks of Himself in this chapter - and secondly

as He is a God of providence, and thirdly as He is a God of grace. The Scripture abounds in descriptions of Him in these particulars.

First as He is the Creator. "In Him we live and move and have our being." Out of nothing He made all things that appear, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear". This is to be insisted on in this day. Do not forget that it is in Him you live and move and have your being. That He has fixed the bounds of your habitation that you may not pass. He is jealous of this honour, this glory; He will not give it to another. The praise of omnipotence shall be His for ever and ever. The glory of having brought into being this whole universe shall be His for ever and ever. Let who will deny it, all the evolutionists in the world shall not really rob God of this glory and praise. May simplicity of faith in this be given to us, that God did create the world. "Let there be"; He said - "Let there be" in six days in succession, bringing all things into being that we see. He created the heavens, He stretched them out. He spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it. He giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein, and shall this honour and praise be taken from Him? "Will a man rob God?" O, yes, too readily. "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" they said, and today men say, wherein have we robbed God? In taking from Him the glory and praise of creation. It is good for a saint to believe this. It is good that the omnipotent One should be presented to faith from time to time as having created the world.

In the second place, He is the God of providence. Providence is nothing less than the execution of His divine purposes. Purposes in His heart, purposes in the Trinity, purposes in the immanent acts of God are brought to pass by, and in, providence. Independent creatures, these boast - "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" When men began to multiply upon the earth after the flood, they moved from the East westward. They came to a plain and probably thought that the increase of men would mean scattering and distances, so they would have, as a memorial, a tower whose top should reach to heaven, and the proud intention provoked God, and He confused their language, and they began to speak each one in their tongue (Genesis 11). Providence arrested the great project and scattered them. When men

were idolators, each one following his own idol, then God called a man out of the East, and raised him up, even Abraham. When Israel's sin provoked God to send Israel into captivity for 70 years, and the day came when they should return, then God raised up Cyrus, His servant. When pride swelled Nebuchadnezzar so as to move his tongue to say - "Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the glory of my kingdom?" God took away his reason, kept it in His Own hand for seven times. When Assyria went against Israel by God's direction to punish Israel, then the proud Assyrian's heart said I am going to destroy cities, and that not a few, and God punished the stout heart of Assyria. Why were you born in a certain place? Why were you moved about in God's providence hither and thither? Why settled in a certain place? Who guided your feet to a certain place of worship where you could hear the word of life? Who gave you a certain possession? Who has prospered the man in business? Who has crossed the earnest, hard worker constantly, so that he is hardly able to maintain himself and family? Is there no God? In Him we live and move in providence. God told the Jews who it was that gave them power to get wealth, and He tells men who would be depending on what they do, and on what they have acquired, not to trust in uncertain riches. I am the LORD. I set up one and put down another. In My hand there is a cup. By my direction men move. I cross men, I prosper men, as seems good to Myself. Watch providence. Do not think lightly of providence, for it is nothing less than God moving, setting up one, and putting down another, and all for the exaltation of His power. It shall come to pass that all shall honour Him. In these two particulars this word must ever stand - "I am the LORD" and I will not give My glory to any creature. The glory of creation, the glory of preservation, the glory of providence, shall be Mine alone, and men shall one day honour Me; whether they will, or whether they will not, they shall honour Me in both these respects.

And the third place, and, in an important sense, greater than the other two, is the work of God in grace. "I am the LORD" in the Covenant of Grace, in which He shines more gloriously than in all His outward works. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away." At the creation no shame covered Adam's face, no guilt burdened his conscience, no inability to stand before his Maker hurt him. He was just an upright man, noble, beautiful, created in

God's image. Man is a noble creature naturally originally. He is a beautiful creature made in God's image, and made for God's delight, but he fell, and all that purity fled when sin entered, and all man's delight and boldness to stand before his Maker went, and guilt burdened, and ashamed him. He knew his condition and tried, when he heard the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, to hide himself. That endeavouring to hide himself was typical of the endeavour that you make, that I make, that all men make. The mention of God is a grief of heart to fallen man. How can fallen man ever come again into the presence of God without shame? How can you, who feel your sinfulness, to whom conviction of your sins has come, stand before a holy God? What Manoah felt, what others have felt, each one felt who is taught of God - We shall die, said Manoah, for we have seen the Lord. Everyone knows that who is convinced of sin. This is not religion as men speak; it is grace in the soul, grace in the understanding, by which a man comes to know, to feel, to acknowledge, that he is a sinner, that he cannot stand before God. Now the Covenant of Grace is this. That, if one may speak so, that contains all God's pity; kindness, love, purposes to save, that has in it, and the Lord Jesus reconciles all these. The Lord of life and glory is here behold God's servant, my friends. Behold the Father's servant, behold the Man Christ Jesus who said to His Father "Thy law is within My heart". "I delight to do Thy will O My God". Behold Him seated on the throne, the equal of His Eternal Father, coming willingly on the wings of infinite kindness, and compassion, from that throne to the womb of the virgin Mary. Behold that Man, pure Man Jesus in union with the eternal Son of God. This is the servant of the Father. In what respects is He the servant of the Father? We shall know if we understand His offices, and the first office that will go largely to explain this is His office of High Priest. We are told what the work of a High Priest is. A Priest is ordained for men in things pertaining to God. And here is exhibited the love, and the wisdom, and the compassion of God. He prepared a body for His beloved Son which He took into union with Himself. "The children being partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same". And the grand reason for that is this, that the Father should take all His people's sin from them and lay it on Him. One of the most wonderful words in the Covenant is this. "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin". This is, in a particular respect, the first and important respect, in

which Jesus is His Father's servant, and I am sure every new-born person desires to know, is seeking to know continually, that he has an interest in this great service of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had to serve in things pertaining to God, which means that He undertook to honour God in every perfection of the divine nature, and to make an end of sin, so that His people could come to God, look to Him, have their faces lightened, and their faces not ashamed. This is the atonement made by Christ. A vicarious death He died; He brought in by His obedience everlasting righteousness. Behold the servant of God, a poor man, having nowhere to lay His head. Behold Him in the wilderness of temptation. Behold Him overcoming in that temptation, the devil; seeing him fall as lightning from heaven. See Him in the garden of Gethsemane, yielding up willingly all that He had as God's servant, freely saying - "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt". See Him in the Judgement Hall, falsely accused by witnesses that had been suborned, and see Him there without opening His mouth, and the reason was this, that He stood in the place of people who ought not to open their mouths, being guilty. We ought not to open our mouths; if He represented us that was the reason that He opened not His mouth when His judgement was taken away. Behold God's servant on the cross. There is a glory underneath the ignominy of the cross. There is a beauty on the cross. The badger's skin of shame covers it from men's gaze, but faith sees it. Now this must be followed by what is here said of Christ - "A bruised reed shall He not break." This takes in afflicted people who go bruised in their consciences, bruised in their convictions, bruised many a time in their circumstances, hardly able to stand before God; confessing, mourning, weeping over their condition. He wont bruise them. He does not take advantage of their condition so as to make it worse, but rather He takes hold of them in His compassion, and strengthens them, and they stand before Him. Grace strengthens faith, grace strengthens hope, grace draws out love, grace brings dependence on the blood of Christ. Grace brings a sinner in all his weakness, and bruised condition, to depend alone on the Saviour.

And the smoking flax, the desire that does not express itself in the word "love", but yet really is love; the desire mixed with so much that is wrong in the sinner, becomes an offensive smoke, but He is not offended with it. He can distinguish where we cannot. He can make a

man believe what Toplady says - "A wisher for Christ is a lover of Christ". He can enable a sinner thus to go following hard after Christ; and the smoke, of which he is ashamed, the mixture of flesh with all that is right, of which he is ashamed, Christ distinguishes, and instead of extinguishing He just trims the lamp, puts more grace, more life, more faith, more hope, more love in the soul. So He brings forth judgement unto truth. Now the glory of this must be given to Him. It is incommunicable. The benefit of redemption comes to the sinner. The glory of redemption belongs to the Saviour. They give it to Him in the church, as we are told in the Revelations - "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His Own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. Unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Now just come to this; what do you do with regard to this glory? If a man helps Christ to save himself, then he must share the glory. If a man says, now God can do nothing for me unless I will let Him - some men say that today - then if a man, whose stout will can prevent the will of God, gives his will up, then of course some of the glory must go to him. But when this takes place - "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power", and the sinner finds all his weapons, and opposition, and enmity, and guilt, taken away, and he stands before God saying - "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" - then God has all the glory of that. His jealousy wont allow you to share His incommunicable glory, and His grace will make you willing to give it to Him. Ah, you will long to put the crown on His head. "On His head are many crowns", and you will put one there as you are enabled.

Take the glory of justification. Now justification is a legal term. Condemnation is legal, by the law. "Where no law is there is no transgression". A man is not condemned for nothing. He is condemned for sin. "The thought of foolishness is sin". Wrong thoughts of God are sinful. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." Now condemnation, therefore, is by the law; so justification must be by the law. Justification, in the case of God's people, is a declaration made by God concerning them - Take away the filthy garments. And the declaration of God is in the conscience. A sinner knows it when he hears the word - "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and as a cloud thy sins". When God says that in a conscience, the conscience knows it,

feels it, rejoices in it, blesses God for it. How can a man expect to go to heaven if he does not know that his sins are forgiven? if he does not know that his filthy garments have been removed, and there has been given to him a change of raiment? Natural religion is not justification. Justification is God's act, not a man's act. God's act, the act of a Judge on the accused person. The accused person is a passive receiver of that act. Not passive when the act has been done on him; O, no, he begins to melt, to repent, to weep, to rejoice, and to bless, and praise God; but the act itself is God's. The glory, therefore, is God's. Yes, the glory of justification is God's.

Thus the Lord's people do unreservedly, affectionately, with the whole heart, give glory unto the Lord. They do it when they sing His praise - "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." What is it to offer praise? If you offer praise really it is the fruit of your lips. It is a sacrifice, and when you do it really you praise Him for something you have received from Him. Blessing God is speaking well of God. When God blesses you He gives you something. When you bless Him it is your speaking well of Him, praising His goodness, praising His mercy, praising Him for appearing to you, for speaking to you, for taking away your filthy garments; praising Him for every token for good; for the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing you from all sin. This is giving unto Him the glory due unto His Name.

"My glory will I not give to another". Mark well the jealousy of God in the Scriptures. Yea, as you are taught of the Spirit, you will understand that jealousy in your experience, for if you turn away from Him in any way, in any measure, He will resent it.

"Neither My praise to graven images". Israel's besetting sin appears to have been idolatry. They learnt, alas, the way of the nations around them. God's jealousy was manifested by destroying the idols, so as that that came to pass in them, that they were made sick by God in smiting them for their idolatry. Now we are no less prone to idolatry, we are not better than the Jews. We have a depraved nature, we have base affections, we are naturally inclined to lean on something other than God, and to ascribe what we have to ourselves.

And when that is the case, then God resents it. His resenting is expressed in the Word of God. He says - "Thou hast left thy first love"; thou hast turned aside to wrong things; and He reproveth for them. Then He gives grace to forsake all and say, as they said by Hosea - "Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our gods, for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy". So that, just as God determines to have the glory, and the praise, they are determined to give it to Him. May we understand this in our experience.

AMEN.