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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel
Brighton on Sunday evening 26 November 1924

ISAIAH XLIV verse 8

"Fear ye not neither be afraid. Have not I told thee from that time and have declared it. Ye are even My witnesses, is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no God. I know not any."

The Holy Ghost by Paul in the Corinthians says "Though there be that are called gods whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." True religion consists in knowing this God. Eternal life consists in knowing this God. We may have a great deal of religion but there is not in all this - knowledge. It is such a gift as only the Holy Ghost is able to impart. You may have fears of hell and live there eternally. You may have much knowledge of the scripture but no knowledge of God. You may be moved to pray naturally for and about natural things, and have not this knowledge of God. You may move among religious people, among the very people of God and have no communion with the people of God in vital things. And everyone believing this is concerned to know whether what he knows is from God, whether he has any acquaintance with the God of heaven. God is One. No God beside Him. If there were He would know it. "I know not any". And this one God subsists in three persons, in majesty and glory equal each with the other. And, as we are under the teaching of the Spirit, it appears to me that we shall more and more be brought to this point - Do we know God? Did we ever get a manifestation of Him? Did we ever see Him? You cannot read the Bible and not see Him. You cannot look on creation and not see Him. But you may see Him and not perceive Him. Seeing is a solemn judgement on many. "Go" He said to the prophet "Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, that seeing they shall not understand." What a solemn thing. What a searching thing. Happy the man who fears the deceitfulness of his own heart, who fears the delusions of the enemy, the devil, who fears lest he should walk in a vain show, and have a lie in his right hand without power to say "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" One would fear that one of the greatest means of destruction of souls allowed by God to-day is religion - easy, flesh-

pleasing religion, easily acquired, and in the issue, easily taken away. If you are confronted with the Holy God as Balaam was by the angel, though he knew it not, you will fall back and you will wither. If the Lord comes near to you, you will tremble. If His sentence is spoken to your conscience you will die, and you will apprehend an eternity of woe. And, when you are laid in the balances, then you will say your sentence is just. What then? You will cry for mercy. And then you will find there is only one God with whom you have to do, and in a sense He will swallow you up, that is, He will take up your thoughts and attention, so that in a way, it will be as if you had nothing to live for, nothing to do with the world. The business which you have to attend to, the cares of life, which press upon you, these, while you do not neglect them, are as nothing compared with the greatness of God that is impressed upon your heart, and the vastness of eternity, which you have to enter.

Well, dear hearers, it is a mercy to be made honest with respect to God, then yourself, then eternity. We are hastening to eternity. Here the Lord speaks to Israel and tells Israel not to fear, neither be afraid. There are several objects of fear which every child of God has from time to time before his eyes. The first, that which swallows up the rest in a sense, is the fear of the majesty of heaven. "Fear not them" says the Lord Jesus, to His disciples "which kill the body and after that have no more that they can do." I will tell you whom ye shall fear. "Fear Him" He says, my friends, "Fear Him who after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." I say "Fear Him!" What an object'. Was this God ever before you? Did you ever fear His majesty? Did you ever perceive that His eye looked you through and through? That every thought of your mind, every wish, every desire, all inward language, idle thoughts, idle words, mentally uttered, that these, all of them, every one in particular, God knows. And did you ever realise that He saw them? Then you will greatly fear. Was His justice ever before you in all its naked terror? Fear Him. Fear His wrath. "Who would not fear Thee O King of nations." It pertains to God alone to give us breath and spirit and life and to take it away when He will. Fear Him. It pertains to Him to give us health or sickness, wealth or poverty, to give us friends, and bereave us of them. Fear Him. It pertains to Him to weigh people in balances, to measure out their pains, to lengthen out their troubles or shorten them. He, He is sovereign. He is the Lord. He is the Lord. Who would not fear Him? What is our life? It is a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanishes

away. What is all we possess? God may command riches to make themselves wings and fly away. Fear Him. He can multiply the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse day by day and apparently no increase in either. He can give you work. He can take it away, health, and can remove it. "I tell you" says Christ, my friends, "fear Him". There are two kinds of fear you may have of God. One belongs to the law - the fear and dread of His majesty, the fear of a slave, the fear of the lash, the fear and dread of justice, fear of hell, God, all the while being before you as an angry God, angry with you for your sins. Many people have that, but a man may have it and never be saved. Balaam had it and when he had a vision of God he said he should see Him but not nigh. He wanted to curse the people of God, and not being allowed, he became angry, but God moved and wrought for Israel and made Balaam a medium of utterance, uttering things which he never would have uttered if left to himself. But when he saw God, he said he was as a man whose eyes were open. He had seen a vision of God. He said "I shall see Him but not nigh," not for himself, and he dreaded, but never loved. You may fear with the fear of a slave, and never love with the love of a child, and this dreadful fear may keep you much, more or less straight in your conduct, but it will never make you love Him who says "Thou shalt not. Thou shalt not". You wish He would or had not said that. This is a poor, terrible thing, this slavish fear. It makes you afraid of the judge, but it never leads you to love Him. It makes you afraid of His majesty, and you would get away from it if you could. There is another fear, the fear of a child. It has love in it, and it makes the man in whom it lives say - I wish I knew Him. I would love to be with Him, to be like Him, to do what He wishes, to fulfil His word, to walk in His ways, and this man, he has a knowledge of the majesty of God, and trembles at it. He hears the word of God and trembles at it. He has a broken heart. Now listen to what God says about this man. He says "Heaven is My throne, earth is My footstool, where is the house ye will build for me;" but to that man will I look and with him will I dwell, that is of a contrite heart and trembleth at My word." How kind the Lord is in thus speaking. He speaks to a trembling sinner. Is he here, this sinner? The Lord give him then to hear the gracious word. "To that man will I look and with him will I dwell!" O says the man - My heart is not a fit place for Him. It is not a suitable dwelling for the majesty of heaven. God is judge of what is suitable to Him. God is judge. If he says that that dunghill of your heart is a place in which He will come, He will make it fit for Him. "His blood can cleanse the blackest soul and wash away each stain." What would you have if you could

have what you wish? You would have Him with you, would you not? You would venture to Him sometimes if you could and invite Him if you dared. And the Spirit is there. What you have in your heart is "Lord come in. Bless my soul. Be my guest. Be my host. Be my Saviour. Be my God. Be my Friend. Call me a friend as Thou didst Thy disciples when Thou saidst 'My friends.'" This fear is a beautiful fear. There is still another fear that I must mention. That is the fear of enemies, and difficulties. People have this fear. Their chief enemies are in themselves - their sins, and they fear them. What does God say about these? Gathering them up into one He says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." That stands well on the side of a sinner who looks at his sins and says I am afraid they will one day be my master. "No!" says God. Grace is more than sin, grace is more than sin. The blood of Christ is more than sin, the righteousness of Christ is more than sin, the love of Christ is more than the love of sin. Fear Not. I am God and beside Me there is no other God. I know not any. I will be thy King. Where is there any other that may save thee. Why sinner, when God speaks that to thee, thou wilt say He is mine. "Surely shall one say in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". Another shall subscribe and call himself by the name of Israel. You may fear men and you may think you have reason, and this good God may come to you and say "Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, of the son of man which shall be as grass and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" Who art thou? A poor, feeble sinner, wishing to be right, and fearing he is not. A poor, erring creature, afraid with amazement sometimes that the providence of God may raise up some enemies for him as He raised enemies to Solomon when he departed from his God. "Fear not". "Be not afraid!" They are in the hands of God as you are. God can put a screen of some providence between you and the man you fear. He put the screen of the Amalekites between David and King Saul. Saul was following David, and so God took, if one may so express it, took the Amalekites and placed them between David and Saul. Fear Not. Be not afraid. Venture forth. Venture on your God. Venture with your providential things. Venture on your God. Fear not. There is a God in heaven who has numbered the hairs of your head, who knows what you need, who says "Your Father knoweth ye have need of these things" O to be more concerned about God's

blessing than about your table, about your body, how it shall be clothed. O to be more concerned to have His favour than thousands of gold and silver. O to be blessed with a longing to be united to God in Christ, rather than have some position in this world which your ambitious mind has set itself upon attaining. You may be allowed to attain the position, but what if you have no God. You may be disappointed about your position, but what of that if you have a God, a God that cares, that loves, that will guide, that will see that no harm comes to you. Who is he that shall harm you? What providence can hurt you if you have God about you? Fear not. Be not afraid. You may have your eye on the Lord in His commandments, in His precepts, in His ordinances and fear. You may greatly fear. You may fear men. You may fear making a profession among men. You may fear your own heart, your pride. There is a good deal more pride in some of us than we may suspect. Pride even in some of our exercises, and we do not suspect it. If we thought we could get on well we should perhaps be more ready than we are to make a profession. Fear not. Venture on Him, venture all, venture wholly. Christ said that if a man would confess Him before men, He would confess him before His Father. What a mercy. What a blessing it is to follow the Lord. Be not afraid. "Is there a God beside Me? Yea there is no God, I know not any."

Now let us see a little by the help of God what this contains. Have we this God, who says there is no other beside Himself? Then we have infinite love. Love as a convoy, love embracing us, love tenderly watching over us. Love, liberally providing for us, love wisely ordering our steps. Love reviving us, love sanctifying crosses to us. Love making everything work for good. What a God He is. O what a God. God is love and there is no other God beside Him. To us there is but one God and we in Him. One God and His Name is love. Think of it sinner, poor sinner cleaving to Him, cleaving to His heavenly throne, seeking His favour, it is better than life, think of this. May the Holy Ghost drop it into your heart that God, this only God, this all-wise God, is a God of love. "Fear not, neither be afraid." Sin and the devil mis-represent God, mis-represent Him to His people, to you and to me. A legal heart joins these two and the three together do, as it were, bring about the most grievous fear and try to keep away a sinner from the throne of grace. "Fear not!" Go, with the chains about your neck. Tell Him how the tyrants lash, what you fear, what you suffer, what you fear you deserve. Yea, if you are in affliction, then there will be work for this fear, this slavish dread of your mind. O, how sin and the enemy will represent,

mis-represent this God. How harsh He is, How untender, what un-wisdom there seems to be in the trouble. Why this to me? Why that? Why am I touched in this tender place? "Fear not," He says "I am God!" "There is no other God!" Look at the tender words He says "Call upon Me in the day of trouble!" The day that He has made, the trouble that He has sent. Call upon Me in this day, about and in this trouble, call upon Me. I am thine. I am your God. I have redeemed you, call upon Me. What will He do? Hear you. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me!" This is what He says. O what a solemn thing it is to be in trouble and have no God to go to. What a blessed thing it is in trouble to have a God to go to, and also to have a Holy Spirit to tell you to go to Him, and help you to go to Him, and guide you to Him. Take you to the atonement, lead you to the righteousness of Christ, lead you, through the priestly work of Christ, to this great God, to call upon Him. Yea, and He will tell you sometimes what to say to Him. "Take away all iniquity, receive me graciously, so will I render the calves of my lips." This is our God. Fear ye not. I have told you that you shall have tribulation. Now it has come, fear not. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace." Christ is the prophet. He tells His people beforehand what they are to expect. He does not allure and deceive. He does not make promises about there being no trouble. He says - You shall have trouble if you follow Him. Think of this. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head!" Follow Me. And, when you are in trouble, then may the Spirit bring it to your remembrance that He said, "in the world ye shall have tribulation," but also He promised peace in Himself - "In Me ye shall have peace!" This is peace of conscience, peace with God. You may have trouble in your circumstances. You may have trouble in your own person, but if you have no guilt on your conscience, if you have a gracious smile from your God, that is the scripture in both parts of it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, in Me peace!" Both parts you have got in your soul when you have trouble and an easy conscience by the blood of Christ. Have not I told you? Therefore ye are My witnesses. Every believing heart, led as I have just spoken, has the witness in himself, and he knows the doctrine of Christ to be true, and he can bear witness for God and say - Now I know what He says is true, I have proved it, and there is no God. Nebuchadnezzar said "There is no God that can do like this." What a mercy to be able to say it as a believing child of God. The heathenish king said it, may the people of God say it.

There is no god that can do after this manner. Keep alive in trouble, preserve in fire, in water, in flood, and flame. Ye are My witnesses.

Be not afraid when the enemy comes in like a flood. He will do if permitted. It is said "When the enemy cometh in like a flood" O you know what a flood does - sweeps all before it, leaves nothing after it. The Garden of Eden, as it were, before it, the wilderness, behind it. Is that something like your experience? Now what says the Lord? The enemy comes in like a flood, but the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. What is that standard? The standard of Christ's gospel. The standard to which the Gentiles shall go. The Lord in whom they shall trust, of whom they shall say He is right, we know it. He is right, we know it, we feel it. There is something positive in real religion. There is the Spirit's clear testimony sometimes. Sometimes you can say - "Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed". You have prayed to Him and He has heard your prayer. Then you say in the name of the Lord we will set up our banner. You may say I cried, and the Lord heard me. The Psalmist was a witness and some people here are witnesses. It was a beautiful testimony that the Psalmist gave as you read - "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications". You think of it. Think of a general profession, all things uncertain in it, and then come to a particular experience. A sinner says - I was in distress and called on the Lord. The pains of hell gat hold upon me. The sorrows of death were about me, and I called upon the Lord in my distress and He heard me. He sent from heaven, sent from above, and took me and drew me and delivered me out of many waters. That is something positive, real, sweet, a testimony for God. Ye are My witnesses.

Then there is another thing when you are made a true witness. You witness for His word. Now this is said by Christ of the word of God. - I have given them Thy word. They have received it. When you have a word given you by the Lord, you know something about it, you receive it. It enters your heart, it talks with you about God, about your troubles and the way you have to go. It speaks to you. Now when you have got that in your heart, you have something to follow and you have something to feel. Every word of God is tried, purified in a furnace of earth, tried by fire. Until the time that His word came, the word of the Lord tried Joseph. The word of the Lord was in Joseph's heart. Then Joseph had to go into Egypt before that word was fulfilled, and one can easily believe the trouble of his heart about his dreams, and the word of the Lord to him in them, was greater, and more bitter than false accusations and

imprisonment. It was the word of the Lord that tried him. When it came to pass, O what a sweetness there was to him. This is God's word. This is the fulfilment of His word to me. Now when you get it in your own experience, you say - now that is true, I myself have known it. A thimble-full of this is better than a mountain of notion. Notion is never fixed. This is fixed, solid, godly, and God-magnifying. Ye are My witnesses that the word of the Lord is true, every part of it. He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? It is not possible for God to un-say a thing or to forget what He said or to neglect to fulfil what He has said. He must do it. His honour and His name is at stake to do it. Grandly does Dr Watts express it

The voice that rolls the stars along,
Speaks all the promises.

Shall He not do it. There is no God beside Me can do this. He is wisdom. This is another thing in God, He is wisdom. He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. They do not know how to get out of it. They would soon be out of it if they could after the flesh. O, but a wise God hedges them in till the time comes for His work of deliverance. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation. Can you leave yourself in His hand? Yes, sometimes, without reservation. All wise and all kind, Thy season is best. Faith says - His time is best. And, added to this is His omnipotence. Who can stand before the power of God? You take these three wondrous, blessed, glorious attributes of Deity - His love, His wisdom and His power, and O how He shines in them. "I am the Lord thy God" says He to one "Is there anything too hard for the Lord"? Any enemy too strong, any difficulty too great, any necessity more than His fulness can match, and supply? Fear not, neither be afraid. Fear displeasing Him. Leave all the rest. Watch his good hand in providence. See how He will work for you and you will find that this is true - He will make it known in His own power and gracious way. Said the Lord of the idols of the heathen - They cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good. Fear them not. O if we always had a right view of idols, if we always had a right view of that chief of all idols, that worst of all idols, self, it would be good for us. It is not in idols to do good. May the Lord help us to believe Him, that we may be witnesses for Him and remember what He said "Fear Him who, after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." "To trust Him endeavour." Look to Him. There is no failure. Never can there be a failure experienced by those

who are enabled to trust in the living God, never. You say this is failure. That may be leading you to success in another way. You say - there is emptiness where I look for some substance and some fulness. That may lead you more to the fulness of Jesus Christ. You may say - I have been deceived. That will lead you to Him who cannot deceive you. You may say - I am learning my emptiness. A blessing for you. Look to this good God, trust Him. He will not deceive you though you hardly of Him deem. Never will He go back on His blessed word and never will any providence say, eventually, that He is other than kind and wise and omnipotent.

And then, lastly, think of this kindness and condescension of this God in speaking to sinners. I do like, when I am enabled a little to think upon the eternal communion that has subsisted in the Trinity. The infinite satisfaction of each with the other. The infinite sweetness of their fellowship. Sufficient for themselves. Sufficient for God, is Himself, and why should He stoop to worms? Why bless sinners? Why think of sinners as He does and speak to sinners? Yea, He calls them friends. He said Abraham, My friend. And Christ turned to His disciples and said - "My friends". "I call you not servants, but friends. A servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you". You are My friends. Now may I ask this question. Did God ever do this part of a friend to you? Make known His mind. Did He ever speak a word to you that revealed His will, His mercy, His Christ, His salvation to you? O, if He did, what a favoured, what an honoured person, you are. What a blessing it is to have the word of the Lord God spoken to your soul. Is there anything like it? Some of us are very rich, if having the word of God in the soul is being rich. We have it, some of us. Unbelief doubts it, Satan would pull it away, but there it remains. I have given them Thy word. They have known I came from Thee. Keep them in Thy Name, O Father, and be with them and bring them to Me, that they may be one as we are one. Ye are My witnesses. Well, what a wonder. What an amazing thing that a sinner should ever have in his heart, the word of the living God, and God Himself there. The Father walking in the sinner, the Son being in the sinner, the hope of glory, and the Holy Ghost being in the sinner, making him His temple.

This God, is the God we adore;
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as large as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end

May the Holy Ghost make this out to us. Amen.