

1916
1397-77
Lm P812

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 25 November 1934

Text: Isaiah 49 v 1

"Listen O isles unto Me and hearken ye people
from far; The Lord hath called Me from the
womb; from the bowels of My mother hath He made
mention of My Name."

This chapter, so remarkable, so beautiful, is entirely occupied with God's word to His Son, His servant, His covenant, and happy that person, that congregation, that nation, that listens to His voice. "Listen O isles unto Me." Among the isles doubtless is our own favoured island. The word of God is very great, very solemn, as addressed to the islands and anyone in this, our own favoured island, who rejects and despises God's word, will find in the judgment day that God has not forgotten that sin. Any of you here, old or young, found thus treating the scriptures of God will realise to your eternal confusion that God noticed that treatment that the scripture received at your hands. It is no trifling thing, no small mercy, to have the scriptures, the revelation of God. Our hearts, being corrupt, always are saying to Him depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Man's disposition is enmity against God and if that enmity be not slain and if you, being enemies, are not conquered, but continue in your sins, in your unbelief, in your ignorance, and in your rejection of the scriptures, let me repeat again to you, God will put you in an eternal remembrance of that sin in an endless punishment of it. It is a dreadful thing to be a creature, fallen and living in enmity against God. The Lord give you, who at this moment may be unregenerate, to realise your condition as unregenerate and your position before Him, a Holy God, even the Lord Jesus who says "Listen O isles unto Me." "I wisdom dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions". But whoso despiseth Me he hates life and loves death. "O" says Christ, "O ye simple understand wisdom" namely Himself and hearken ye people from far, from the favoured land

from the covenant people, far off Gentiles, spoken of as being far off. You who were far off yet now hath He made nigh in that mysterious wonderful act of divine grace. Hearken to Me, hearken to this. You are fallen, you are enemies, you are guilty, you are heaping to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath. Hearken to this. Have you got an ear to hear it? Have you ever contemplated your condition? Have you ever seen the scriptures to be the very living Word of God, quick and powerful, that is living and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword. According to this ancient prophecy, so it was. The mouth of Christ is like a sharp sword. Have you ever considered eternity, tremendous sound, and that you must live through an eternity to come? Have you ever considered that God is just and will be glorified in the punishment of sinners. Has His attribute of justice ever shined upon you or have you never thought of it? Hearken to Me said Jesus in this word. Hearken. You will hearken one day and if it be the day of judgment when you hearken, woe to you. Better for you never to have been born than to hearken to Christ for the first time in eternity when all you will hear is that solemn word "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." I may not say more warning words to you, but this I do say, listen if you can, to this solemn word of Christ "Listen O isles unto Me." I have authority; you are My creatures. "Hearken ye people from far" you Gentiles. Heaven, hell, bliss, eternal darkness, Christ speaks of in Holy Scripture, and if you never listen to this blessed word while you are living, nothing is before you but an inescapable punishment throughout eternity.

"The Lord hath called Me." This was done in eternity, in the counsel of peace. It was announced in Genesis when the Lord said "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head" the serpent's head. It was spoken of to Abram when the Lord said that in him all families should be blessed. Ah it was in ancient days spoken of when Melchisedec met Abraham returning from war and blessed him and the Spirit says by Paul in the Hebrews "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." (Hebrews 7 v 7) because Melchisedec was a type of Christ and so there could be no greater, none so great. So the type blessed Abraham. I have

called, said God, by the Psalmist, I have called Thee to be a High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec not after the Aaronic priesthood, for that was for a time. No man taketh the honour of being a priest but he that is called of God as was Aaron. So Christ took not on Himself this honour, to make Himself a Priest, but He that said unto Him - Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. "The Lord hath called Me", the Man Jesus whose name was named on Him by the angel before He was born. "Listen to Me". Now a fool, who knows himself to be a fool by the teaching of the Spirit, comes to Christ for teaching. He comes to Him and says in his heart - Lord teach me how to pray as John also taught his disciples. He listens to Christ, who says "Come to Me" and in simplicity of heart, under a sense of sin and guilt he says "Teach me how to pray". If Christ teaches us how to pray, one thing is certain among other things, namely we shall not pray as did the pharisee. He thought he prayed, pretended to pray, and proudly spoke - I am not as other men are, I am not a wicked man, as this publican by my side. If you are taught to pray you will say "God be merciful to me a sinner" and that will go on through your life because you are always sinning. Woe unto every one of us, blessed with grace, when you are slipping away, turning away from God, and do need to be taught how to pray, to be brought back. And when the Lord teaches a sinner to pray he says this - forgive us our sins. Forgiveness by God is a burial. Never will God dig up what he buries. I have cast thy sins behind My back into the depth of the sea. Do you pray for forgiveness? Forgive us our sins. Then a man of God listening to Christ prays that he may have a righteousness better than that of the pharisees. Listen to Him "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom." Now when you have the hearing ear and the understanding heart you go for this blessing. He calls His people to it. Then they pray this that God would command the heavens to drop down and the sky to pour down righteousness and the earth, the church, to receive it and bring forth fruit, bring forth salvation.

"He hath made mention of My Name". The Name is Jesus, a beautiful Name. Joshua, he led the people into the land of

• promise. God leads His people by His Son into the land of promise. Moses did not, could not, lead into the gospel. Joshua had to do that. Moses was the law giver, he could not go into the land of promise. He died by the hand of God and it will be so in our consciences that Moses will die, not weak, no dim eye unable to discern sin, no diminished strength unable to punish sin. Moses did not lead the people into the land of promise. Joshua did. Christ comes after Moses. Moses as a rule is first in the conscience of a regenerated person. As a rule Moses comes to a sinner bankrupt and says, pay me that thou owest, and at the same time discovers to that bankrupt that he is a bankrupt, that he has nothing wherewith to meet the claim of Moses. Then Jesus comes, the Saviour of such a person, He comes to Him and He teaches the sinner to refer to Him all the charges. He teaches a sinner by faith to go to Christ, the Saviour. Christ saves from sin in several regards. First as to the very being of sin. Sin was laid on Him and He made an end of it. A wonderful Jesus was He who, on the cross, said "It is finished". A Saviour. Jesus finished death because He removed sin. Jesus took the terror and victory from the grave, because He took away sin, made an end of it. That is what poor sinners need. Some of you may be saying day and night at times, O that my sins were forgiven. O that I knew Jesus was my Saviour. I have nothing but sin; I have not as good work to bring before God; I have nothing but misery in my mind, nothing but uncertainty about eternity, yet I want to be sure before I die. I want to know that God is my God, and Jesus my Saviour. That is the grand enquiry. God keep any of you, in whose heart it is, from resting until you rest in a manifested forgiveness, a spoken pardon and justification by Jesus. He saves from the dominion of sin, when He gives eternal life to a sinner, when sin no more rules, when that is true that the Apostle writes to the Ephesians - you who were dead hath He quickened, and then, and therefore, you do not now walk after the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. You are brought from that. A man is made honest in his conscience before God. When he is born again he realises that he is a poor, dead thing in the law, that he is a mass of corruption in the sight of God and now in his own sight and feeling. He realises that he is under condemnation and that he cannot deliver

himself from that condemnation. He realises that he deserves hell and is afraid of it. To live is dreadful, to die would be worse as he now stands and so strong cries go out of his heart to God. "God be merciful to me a sinner". No lip service is that sentence. It is the heart's feeling, the heart's cry - Save me, Lord save me. Now sin is in that person, that is his trouble, but sin does not rule in that person and that is his mercy. Bless God that some of us can say and have said often that sin is in us but it is our trouble. The greatest sorrow we know, the keenest pain we ever experience, is indwelling sin. But we can say this, it does not rule. It breaks out. Sometimes it breaks out in a hasty word, sometimes in a bad temper, sometimes in rebellion, sometimes even in wishing you had never been born. O, indwelling sin. But the outbreak of sin in your mind and your thoughts by which you grieve, over which you grieve, and make confession, that is not dominion. Mortification of sin is a gracious exercise and a vehement desire to be made right in the sight of God and to abstain from the very appearance of evil is one part of mortification. I judge it to be so. I have felt it to be a hopeful thing in my own case. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." How is this to be done? "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." Ah, says a mourning sinner to the Lord, Lord I feel I can say I would not do it. That is just what Paul said "The evil that I would not I do". Go mourner, go distressed sinner, to that blessed Jesus and when you can say it, do say - "I would not do it". Sin overtakes us. You do not excuse yourself. No. Confession of sin and desire to be delivered is not excusing yourself. Perhaps you pray at times the prayer of Jabez "O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed" that Thine hand might be with me, that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me. Well it is a good prayer. It will do for a man on his dying bed when evil rises. It will do for a young man who is struggling in many ways because of his sins and his convictions and his infidelity and his hardness of heart and his rebellion against God's way. You want to come to God's terms sometimes but His terms to your nature are very harsh. What are His terms? "When thou art nothing in thyself, then thou art close to Me."

Jesus is named Jesus. Why, sometimes the thought of it is sweet. Sometimes you can almost say, but you say it as it were, in a hurry, "Jesus is precious says the word" and you can say "and to me." Sometimes you can hardly get it out before the feeling is gone, yet God notices it. That tear that you dropped in your spirit, if none should trickle down your cheek, God puts into His bottle. He saves from the dominion of sin. Mark it and see if, at times there is that in you that answers to that word - mortify, kill, and when you say to some sin that claims attention and craves indulgence, by the grace of God I will not. There is a will in the child of God really, a good will. God gives it to him and if there be a willing mind it is accepted. "According to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not". You, as God helps you who fear God, notice these points. They may help you at times.

And He saves eventually from the very being of sin. Oh the thought has been good to me at times that the day is approaching when I shall not have sin in my nature. The being of sin will be uprooted and destroyed for ever. "Thou shall call His Name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins."

Now in regard to this blessed Name again, He heals

Jesus heals the broken-hearted

O how sweet that sound to me

Think of it. You go to Him sometimes with such a broken feeling in your heart. You have slipped, you have said some wrong word, you have had some evil temper, you have passed some wrong judgment, you have quarrelled with God and now you are sorry in your soul for it and you go to Him. A broken feeling. Oh He does notice things which we do not. He notices the operations, movements of the soul toward Himself and dear friends we can perhaps scarcely realise the kindness of Christ to a sinner who goes to Him in that spirit. Lord I am sorry. "I said I will be sorry for my sin and Thou forgavest me." And this ancient scripture was written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

And in this beautiful chapter we have this word which has struck me at times. "I will preserve Thee", that is the Man Jesus, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who had the weight of all the sins of all His people, "and give Thee for a Covenant of the people". And again it says - "a light unto the Gentiles." God has given this Jesus to be a Covenant between Himself and them, and they make a covenant with Him sometimes, by sacrifice. You will give something up, yes you will give something up when you make a covenant with God in Christ. What is that? Yourself. Lose your life and offer yourself up, a poor Gentile. The Holy Ghost teaches in the scripture that the offering up of the Gentiles is acceptable. You have nothing better to offer up when you offer yourself. Oh but it is a bad self, yes it is a bad self. The old man is not getting better. He remains what he was. But a sinner with grace, comes and offers himself, without excuses to God, and God receives Him. One of the most wonderful things, that God receives a sinner. It has made me happy sometimes that He has not rejected my poor approaches to Him, and you will find the same. O you will find, when you come to Him in poverty, that you cannot avoid, and sin that you cannot irradicate, and evil that you cannot wash away, He will receive you graciously and what was true of this Jesus, in the days of His sojourn here, is true today in the spirit. The pharisees murmured saying "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." What a Saviour He is in that He should receive sinners, and heal their sick souls and bring them again and again into His banqueting house, and cause them to know, that His banner over them is love.

AMEN.