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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 17 July 1927

ISAIAH 49 v 23 (last clause)

"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me".

We none of us want God by nature. That is the greatest sin that we can commit; there is no immorality so terrible as that, utter turning away from God through the prevalence of unbelief, and that immorality attaches to every man and woman in this world where there is no Holy Ghost. If you do not want God you are dead in trespasses and sins. If unbelief is an unbroken sin in you, at present you are on the way to perdition. You have gone through the wide gate and are walking in the broad way that leadeth to everlasting destruction. Good men, that is to say, men born again, whose desire is said in the Scripture to be only good, do use, out of feeling, at times, the language of the Scripture: As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so pant our souls after Thee O God.

This thirst never can be quenched but by the coming to the sinner of the Lord of life and glory; nothing else will do. If our souls are in a healthy condition that will be one strong feeling in us, that we can never be content until we have the Lord in the arms of our faith, till He is formed in our heart the hope of glory. If you get tokens for good, prize them, thank God for them. If you get a repenting spirit, if you get zeal moving you to seek Him, if you get help from the Scripture, if any help comes from the ministry, if you get good times in secret, do bless God for them, but they are not to be your resting place. A jealous God, if He sees you making that bad use of His mercies, will withhold those mercies, and you will find yourselves lacking the good things that you have had. We may make a bad use of God's goodness and the enemy will forward that work if permitted. Look brethren at this; see if you are enabled to make good use of God's goodness to you. If a help helps you on; if a token for good attracts you to Him who gave it to you; and if so, follow on in that direction. The Apostle Paul has a word on this point: "Nevertheless" says he to the Philippians "whereto we have already

attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Walking there is following on. Let us follow on to know Him who gave the good things we had, the token for good bestowed upon us. Waiting has the spirit of seeking and expectancy in it. Nobody waits without some hope or expectation of getting that for which he waits. Despair of obtaining means you run away and there will be no waiting. When God helps a man by the Holy Ghost to hope for all that heaven has good, that man waits for the communications of mercy, and especially, and above all other things, for the coming of God into his soul. See the zeal of the church as spoken in this book of Isaiah: "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil" to get to Thyself a great Name. He has a great Name, but He gets to Himself a great Name when He comes into the heart and into the case of a sinner. Waiting? It is praying, asking, begging, arguing, and following hard after God. What a continual exercise this is where the Holy Spirit is. What a continual looking for some supplies from a full God there is, when the Holy Ghost is working in this way. "Truly", said the Psalmist, "my soul waiteth for God. In God is my salvation." Then you must have Him to have that salvation. As a thirsty land, said the Psalmist, my soul thirsteth for God. Those expressions set out before us that none can satisfy the immortal soul, but God. Berridge, in his own terse way, tells us this. He said

The portion of a beast
Cannot content my heart
The God of spirits only can
Fill up the vast desires of man

There are vast desires in all men, but some of those vast desires rise to heaven; others are content with the earth. When those desires rise to heaven, then a man can honestly say he longs for God

I seek and hope to find
A portion for my soul
To heal a feverish mind
And make a bankrupt whole
A cup of blessing for the poor
That's full and free and flowing o'er

Now brethren if we are made and kept healthy in our souls we shall be able to say, and constrained to say, again and again, we want God; we cannot do without Him. One good man, even this prophet, said "I will wait for the Lord that hideth Himself from the house of Israel". I will look for Him. A great thing that, and the promise of God is this, "I will pour water upon Him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour My Spirit upon their offspring." This is the Spirit of promise, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and that is the matter with which I closed this morning, "The Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ." The greatest blessing you can have in this world, and the sweetest foretaste you can have in this world, is when you get that Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, for connected with that is the next verse where the Apostle says: "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints". The riches of His grace, the riches of His eternal love in choosing us in His dear Son, in giving grace to His dear Son for us. In laying on His dear Son a commandment to lay down His life. In giving His Holy Spirit and sending Him to the virgin Mary, and by that mysterious act of creation bringing forth the sacred Manhood that the Son of God was to unite to His divine Person; the riches of God's grace in all these things. And then giving a sinner such a thirst for Himself as that nothing can satisfy but Christ coming and forming Himself the hope of glory in the heart. If I were now to put a question to you, it would be this, how many of you have received Jesus Christ, received Him in such a demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, as to possess in your hearts an indubitable evidence, proof, that you are the Lord's and the Lord is yours? Such people may lack, after even that, lack the presence that they have had, that they have been indulged with, and when it is so, then this comes to pass, as the Holy Spirit is in them to help them, they wait for Him. "I will wait for the Lord who hideth Himself from the house of Jacob."

Do you wait for the forgiveness of sins? The forgiveness of sins is one of the first things and one of the last things that God's people need. The body of sin and death is in us, with us, tied to us, and we have no hope given to us in the Scripture, nor by the Spirit of God in our hearts, of getting rid of this in this life, but there is a hope that sin shall not have dominion over us. But even so, this

dreadful thing, this body of sin and death will send us to sleep, or drive us into the world, or fill us with corroding care, or lay burdens on us that will make us fret and make us think we cannot, and yea even to say we will not, bear them. Hence the conscience gets guilt and the soul becomes defiled and if the devil is allowed, for any time, to lull such a person to sleep, then there comes to pass that word in the sinner: "They all slumbered and slept," and what a sad state that is. I wonder if any of you are there, sleeping and slumbering. If you are you will get a very great shock one of these days. You will get such a shock and such a shake as will make you wonder what has come to you. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light". (Ephesians 5 v 14). "It is high time to awake out of sleep.....The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Romans 13 v 11/12). And when you hear such sounds in your consciences, I repeat it, you will get such a shock as will shake you terribly. God knows your state. I would speak affectionately to you. If any of you, born again, are sleeping and slumbering, you have got something to awaken you. It is coming; some trouble, some judgement - what is called the spirit of judgement and of burning - will come into your case, and then you will find - Woe is me that I have sinned. I would sit on the ground; I have now no crown. I am not crowned with lovingkindness in my experience now. Woe is me. And this state, this solemn state, some are in, and it becomes me to warn the people of God to whom I speak in these days, it becomes me to warn you all that there is coming a time when there will be a cry: "The Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him". The nation is at ease, as Zechariah saw the whole world were at ease, and it displeased the Lord that the nations of the world were at ease. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" He says. That ease is the contrary of my text, just the opposite of it. You may be heavy with sleep, and a very solemn thing it is for you to get into trouble, to be awakened, to have a fire burning about you to awaken you; to have some solemn judgement in your conscience; to have the spirit of burning there to burn up your drowsiness, and take away your sleepiness, and bring you into a real exercise before God. If you wrap yourselves about with a comfortable religion, and with what you felt years ago perhaps to be a good hope given to you, and make this bad use of it, you will find yourselves stripped of all that, and the confidence you have got rejected, until you are brought very low. And surely in this day, with such signs of

God's displeasure, of such portentous clouds hanging over the nation, and such evidences of His absence from the Church, it behoves God's poor people to search and try their ways and turn again to the Lord. How many of us can really say: "My soul waiteth for God". Could you, dear friends, go into your rooms, shut your doors about you, and bare your heart before God, and say, Lord, Thou knowest that is my case; I do wait for Thee. It is difficult, but I wait for Thee. Many contradictions come, and opposition, but I wait for Thee. Unbelief tells me I shall never find Thee, but I wait for Thee.

Judgement will begin at the house of God, and if it begin at the house of God, and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear. Does judgement ever begin anywhere unneeded? Does God ever speak a rebuke that is not needed? Does He ever send the Spirit of judgement and of burning without need? In that connection in this prophecy you find that the daughters of Zion are covered with filth, and He is going to purge it away and He does it by the Spirit of judgement and of burning. That Spirit of judgement is the dealing, the teaching of the Spirit in the heart, opening the eyes and telling the soul and conscience, of the state it has come into. And then that judgement has burning connected with it. Every sacrifice is salted with fire, and when a sinner has his eyes opened, and his conscience quickened again to see the condition he has sunk into, then that fire of the Holy Spirit is within him and as he goes before his God, confessing his sin, and bringing a broken heart to the Lord, that offering of Himself - for it is an offering of himself - is salted with the fire of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit's grace, the Spirit's work, and every sacrifice that God accepts is thus salted. That keeps the soul from the putrefying influence of sin in its prevalence. Do you wait? Wait for the coming of God into your soul? One may say, but He does not go away from the elect; He never leaves the Church. Well, listen to this: "I will go and return to My own place, until they acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they will seek Me early". What will you say to that my friends? Besides that, are you not conscious of a difference between what you once were in the simplicity of your heart, in the love of your soul to the Saviour, in the zeal you had for His presence, and His honour and His glory, and the state of your mind at the present? Is there not a difference? Did you not once go after Him in the wilderness, in a

land that was not sown? Were you not once willing, and able, and enabled to follow Him fully, regardless of all consequences at the time. Was He not more beautiful to you than all the world; more excellent than the fine gold, than the golden wedge of Ophir? And now, how is it? Then you waited for Him; now you have gone away from Him. Then He was desirable; now other things have taken the place of your Lord. In this very chapter, so promising, so good in the prospect of it, there is chastisement, there is chastisement for sin. God hides His face from His people. But when the day comes for good things, then there is given this spirit of waiting for God. And if I hang about this it is because of the vast importance of it. Dear friends, we are only right as to experience, and only safe as we walk, when we have the Lord with us. By our walk, I mean the inward walk. "We walk by faith, not by sight". Depend upon it if you are looking for anything short, and anything else, but God, you will get rebukes and reproofs and barrenness and darkness and confusion, and yet you may fret for a time against it and say, well but I have got this and I have had that, and what more? It is a sore thing and a sorry thing for you if you are content with that kind of thing. Safe, you may be; sound, you are not. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how much less this house that I have built". But He said: To that man will I look and with him will I dwell that is of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at My word. And it is said in the Revelation that the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them. And Himself said, as recorded in the gospel of John, "If a man love Me he will keep my words, and My Father will love Him and we will come unto Him and make our abode with him." All this teaches this one thing, that there is such a mercy, and such an experience, as the presence of God with a sinner, the felt presence of God. He is everywhere, but there is a felt presence that is particular and not common. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." Wait on, there is a prospect, a great prospect set before a sinner, a waiting sinner, when the Lord, for whom that sinner has waited, shall say, "Behold Me, behold Me"; and when the sinner, conscious of the Lord's coming, shall in his heart say: The voice of My beloved, behold He cometh leaping o'er the mountains, skipping o'er the hills. There is sometimes a kind of, if I may say so, a kind of spiritual foreshadowing, a token, a rumbling, a moving in the soul, telling the coming of God, telling that the Lord

is coming, and when He comes He does not come as the sinner has feared He would come. He comes with double love, and says "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people saith your God". What is the comfort? The Lord hath pardoned your iniquity and you shall receive double at His hands. The double is the forgiveness of all sin and the presence of God. Blessed double. Everything you have done washed away, and all expectations of anger taken away and His holy, gracious, all-filling, all-satisfying presence. "I am the Lord." "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward". And when God communed with Abraham, Abraham fell on his face. He had quite enough then. Do you wait for Him? This is a point and I would desire to press it on your attention because it is so natural to our religious minds for there is a religious mind in people, even when God has called them, however intensely irreligious they may have been before. There is something beyond all that, and that is the presence of God, the holy presence, glorious presence, all-filling, satisfying presence. And faith, O faith, loves this presence, enjoys this presence. We sing sometimes

Bring me where I my heaven may find
The heaven of loving Thee alone

Wait for Him. Waiting, as I said, has an expectation in it, and this gives point and edge to the desire and the prayer for His presence. "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down". Your sins may have made your heaven as iron and your earth as brass. The sins of the Israelites did. Their sins made their heaven as iron and their earth as brass, and no clouds full of rain, for the time appeared, and they could not say they waited for God; they went away from Him. Yea, they said that His service was a weariness; they said His table was contemptible. One may say, that was the Jews, and I wish that no Gentile child of God could say it. If I make a confession here and now it is this, I have said it and I know how God dealt with me for saying it, and what fears I had that I should never be in His service again or at His table. Mind what you say, be careful of these things, and may you be enabled to wait for Him. Wait till He comes. Impatience and unbelief will unite to say, He wont come. Do not believe them. Many will say, "Lo here is Christ" and seek to make you satisfied with something short of the Christ of God. But a

waiting heart will say I want Him whose presence will save me and sanctify me, and humble me, and give me an indubitable proof that it is the very Christ of God. His presence is salvation: "Thou art My salvation to the ends of the earth". His presence is power, for Christ is the power of God. His presence is holiness, for He is the holy God. His presence is love, for "God is love". His presence is life: "I am the life". And His presence is light: "I am come a light into the world". That is the presence, that is the presence to seek. It makes the favoured soul very lively, it makes the favoured soul very humble. People may think, and say even, that we must be a proud people to think that we are favoured of God, while others are left, but the truth of the matter is this, the only humble people in the world are the people who are humbled by the presence of God. You cannot be humble until you have been humbled. Trouble may humble you, conviction may humble you, but it will be a sort of humiliation that is not sweet, but the presence of God will so humble you that it wont be a humiliation. It will be a happiness, a real pleasure to lie low at His footstool and to esteem others better than yourselves.

And this presence of God will make you go after Him in a land not sown, in the wilderness. But, says unbelief, if you go into the wilderness and into a land not sown, how are you going to be provided for? What will you do? The wilderness is a place where the provision is lacking that you need; a land not sown. Well, what can you expect but dearth, famine, death? "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward". The carnal professor may have his heart all the time on gold and God on his lip but far from his heart. But a child of God finds, at times, even if naturally he loves gold, the love of it taken away, and the love of Christ taking its place. He will find it so, and that not by any effort or work of his own, but by the precious grace, the love, sweet love of Christ, and by the beauties of Christ. Wait for Him. Do we wait for Him or do we wait for religion? That may mean something far short of the Lord. "My soul doth wait and in His word do I hope". That is the thing.

But I must say a few words on another point. It is this, wait for Him in your temporal trials. It was not a meaningless word that the Lord Jesus uttered when He said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation". You will get the threshing instrument sometimes if

you belong to the Lord, for that is what the word "tribulation" means. You have seen perhaps the old-fashioned flail used by the farmers and today you see the threshing instrument, the great machine. They both did the same thing; they separated the chaff from the wheat. Jesus said to His disciples: "In the world" - that hates Me, and if it hates Me it will hate you; "In the world" - that lieth in wickedness; "In the world" - where God is not, where He is mocked and trampled under foot; "In the world ye shall have tribulation". You will get it; it may be in affliction in your person, it may be trouble in your business, it may be sorrow in your family, but it will come somewhere and teach you, teach you that this is not your rest, and it may perplex you, and it may come athwart some of your ambitions, and what then? If you wait on yourself you will gad about. If you wait on your own counsels you will go in a wrong way. If you wait on God you will lie at His footstool, active in your exercises, fearful lest you should take a false step and get out of the way of understanding. A right exercise, real faith, will bring every afflicted person to wait for direction. "Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee". And when the direction comes it will be the substance of this word: "This is the way, walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." O, but circumstances may say, if you do not move, destruction will come. Yes, and unbelief will say, you must take the first train, or you must run to this friend, or you must go there, you must do that; do not stand still. I have often said to you and I will venture to say it again, he makes the best speed who walks on his knees. I speak metaphorically, of course. If you can pray, if you can wait on God, if you have got a heart to seek Him, that is going well. "I the Lord will hasten it in His time". His haste is wise, His time is right and best. Our haste is confusion. Wait on Him in all things and for all things.

Now a church may wait on God. I hope we may here be said to wait on Him. What for? The continual supply of grace to keep us awake; to add to us every needed good, to increase us with the increase of God. To bring us, in some degree, to answer that wonderful word in the Ephesians. "From whom", that is Christ, "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth". That is the state of a good, healthy, gospel church. Take heed dear friends, fellow members, and brethren, and the godly in the congregation, take

heed to this. Nothing is superfluous in this Book. You may often be so exercised about your own case, your personal case, as not to regard what the Scripture says about a church, but it is good to regard what the Scripture says about a church. Wait, wait on God. A minister should wait on God for His ministry. The greatest labour of a minister is not in the pulpit. It is before he comes into the pulpit. He may be labouring day and night for days before he preaches a sermon and he has to wait on God. Solomon expresses a good part of the matter when he says "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words" Paul speaks of the same thing in spirit and substance when he says, we speak not the words of this world's wisdom, but the words of God, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. And if you are exercised about hearing and I am exercised about speaking, we shall meet together and profit will follow. Of all the troubles that a minister sent of God to preach can have, an unexercised people will be the greatest trouble. It would be - you may not think it - but it would be. If I came here in this pulpit with something in my spirit to say and you have no appetite and no desire, no hunger, I shall not say it. I may use the words, but the substance wont be there. Wait on God as a church and congregation. Wait on Him. Wait on Him for the unction. Of all loyal people, you will find loyalty the strongest in the saints of God. They are anxious to be subject to the powers that be, knowing that the powers that be are ordained of God, and ought we not - in this time, this time of great danger and crisis in the nation; ought we not when we see iniquity running down our streets like water, when we know that profanity is not confined to an open breach of the Lord's Day, but that profanity expresses itself in numberless pulpits of the land, and when the eternal Person of Jesus Christ is denied and His incarnation is denied, when the blasphemous Mass is offered now and will be more widely offered probably in a short time when it is legalised - ought we not, as a congregation of people professing the holy Scriptures and what they teach, to be concerned about our nation. When the judgements of God are threatening and the clouds which are very low and full of judgement, are about to empty themselves, shall we be exempted? Do we expect to get away from all this trouble? Not if we are rightly exercised. But if we are waiting on God there will be a wonderful exemption. "Come My people, enter thou into thy chambers". And what may touch us in our families, afflict us in our business, wont touch our souls, wont destroy our

religion. A man who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, and abideth under the shadow of the Almighty, is in a good state; so it is said, blessed is the man who dwells there, in the secret place of the Most High. He is dwelling in the eternal Covenant of Grace, and the shadow of the Almighty is the shadow of the wings of the Sun of Righteousness. Hiding in Jesus Christ, dwelling there. Happy there, comfortable there, sometimes. And these things are waited for. "For these things will I be enquired of by the House of Israel, to do them for them."

And we are to wait with respect to a dying day. That may be near to some of us, and the shock of that icy flood will try all religion. It will try all religion. When we have not the help of a service, when we are beyond the help of our friends, when heart and flesh fail. Do you wait for a good end? Let my last end be like the righteous, that good end, that blessed end, of the righteous. It is written "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." No other death can be blessed, but that is, that must be. And whenever that day comes, be it soon to some of us or longer, it will not matter as to the time. To die in the Lord will be the one thing; to be landed on the other side of that icy flood, and to get that welcome into the presence of God that is to be accorded to all the saints. This is worth waiting for. Wait on Him, that is, seek this, this blessing at the hand of our heavenly Friend, our gracious God and Father in Jesus Christ. Beloved friends, may it please God to give to you, and give to me, power to wait on Him.

Now one word in conclusion, the promise. "They shall not be ashamed" Well, but one says, I am always ashamed. Ashamed of praying? No, ashamed of not praying. Ashamed of cleaving to Christ? No, ashamed of running away from Him. They shall not be ashamed of Him, not be ashamed of their hope, nor ashamed of their God, nor ashamed of that righteousness that they waited for and prayed that they might wear. Not ashamed of that holiness, with which they shall all be clothed, nor that love that shall move every breast, and fill every heart with infinite satisfaction. Not ashamed of the atonement that removed sin from them. Not ashamed. No, nor ashamed of waiting. We have got much to be ashamed of - I have, you have - much to be ashamed of in our profession, very much. The sloth, idleness of hands, the fullness, the improper fullness of bread, the turning away

from the Lord, not waiting for His counsel. Of these things we have need to be ashamed. "Shame and confusion of face", said a godly Daniel, "belong to us. Unto the Lord our God - blessed be His Name for it - Unto the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses." So we shall not be ashamed of Him. And, a wonder of wonder is this, that this not being ashamed on the part of His people is carried on to the Lord Himself. "He is not ashamed to be their God". Nor ashamed to be called their brother. What? Will He come and glory in us? Will He say, these are Mine, before an assembled world? Will He say of you, of me, here is My brother, here is the purchase of My blood? Here is the work of My grace, here is the image in which I new-created this person? I am not ashamed to be called his God, nor ashamed to call him My brother. O blessed is that person who has God in Him, Christ in Him, the Trinity in Him. The Father dwelling in him and walking in him. The Son dwelling in him by faith and the Spirit making his body His own temple. Wait on Him my friends. Wait on Him for grace, renewing grace, sanctifying grace, enabling grace, fructifying grace. Wait on Him for all these promised blessings and all of them are in that word: "Christ in you the hope of glory".

AMEN.