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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Sunday morning 3.8.1919.

"That Thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth: to them that are
in darkness, shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their
pastures shall be in all high places."

Isaiah 49 v 9

This is the word of God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, to God the Son
incarnate. A gracious word to Christ concerning His office and work. "Thus
saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One to Him whom man
despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers. Kings
shall arise and princes also shall worship because of the Lord that is
faithful and the Holy One of Israel and He shall choose thee."

"Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time," when He prayed in His trouble,
offered strong cries and tears unto Him that was able to save Him, and was heard
in that He feared. In this dark hour of Christ's affliction, says His Father
to Him "I have heard Thee", and it is in an acceptable time; the day of
salvation. "And in a day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will
preserve thee." These words sound mysterious when you consider that they are
spoken to Him who is very God, but also who was very man, and who in this work
of salvation was God's servant, elected to this great work, to fill this
wonderful office, with whom the covenant was made. "I will preserve
Thee and give Thee for a covenant to the people, to establish the earth and
to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." And this was the one end of this
so wonderful word of the Father to Christ - "That Thou mayest say to the prison-
ers, go forth, to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves" and when He
has done this - Sent forth the prisoners and brought the people in darkness
out of darkness - they shall feed in the ways unto which He sends them, and
their pasture shall be in all high places where the light dwells. These
great words, let us look at as helped and first of all one must speak of the
prison, the prisoners. It is easy enough to talk about religion where
no God is, no grace is, but real religion, God's work, begins where people
are, not where people imagine themselves, but where people are. This is an
important point. Where are we by nature? We are in sin and sin is a very
prison. We are in death. We are in guilt. We are in bondage to evil.
We are enclosed so to speak in the law, surrounded by the law, claimed by the
law which we have broken. Here is a prison or perhaps one may for
convenience say, here are prisons. The first is sin in which we are born,
shapen, live under the condemnation of, which we are by nature, out of which
we have no power to deliver ourselves, and this is an amazing thing. This
prison so to speak is full of dreadfulness, and yet full of justice. In us,

of dreadfulness, in God, of justice, and if we, to suppose for one moment could even think of extracting ourselves out of the dreadfulness of sin, out of sin itself; justice unappeased would oppose us. Awfully true, rendering one or two things absolutely necessary - either satisfaction rendered to justice, or justice claiming us as its victims, and holding us for ever. The one means heaven to all interested in the satisfaction given to justice, the other means eternal perdition to all who shall die in their sins, and can one in honesty, as a minister pass such a subject by lightly. Let me therefore once more call your strict and serious attention to this terrible prison, and notice how it becomes possible for God, for Christ, to say to prisoners - "go forth". We became shut up in this prison when Adam fell. In another word in the scripture this prison is called death. Dead in trespasses and sins. We are shut up in it. Locked up hopelessly as to self. Locked up in this prison-house - sin, and we were justly locked up in it too, for the just God said to Adam unfallen - "In the day that thou eatest thereof," that is of the forbidden tree, "thou shalt surely die." O sinner, there is no injustice in your state from God, though your state is one of absolute injustice to Him. There is nothing wrong in God in shutting up a man in unbelief. Nothing unjust in God, in detaining a sinner in this prison and leaving him to die in it. I do not know how many of you believe, or disbelieve this. I know some of you believe it, but it is a great truth and it involves the character of God. It makes Him great in the condemnation of men. It asserts that there is no unrighteousness in Him; that there would have been no unrighteousness in Him if He had passed all wicked men by, as He passed by all fallen angels, but to exalt the riches of His love, and the glory of His grace, and of His blessed nature, as exhibited there, He determined to send forth some of these wicked prisoners out of their prison. They had put themselves in it as much as any thief or murderer in our land puts himself into prison, and takes himself so to speak to the gallows. We put ourselves where we are. God made man upright, and he sought out many inventions, and landed himself in ruin absolute, if God did not interfere. May I be enabled to exalt this great God; and the love of God found out a way by which He could, honourably to Himself, satisfyingly to His justice, say to prisoners, "go forth", that is, be delivered. You are delivered, and how could this be done? How can one who is justly in prison, and whose release is impossible unless he be fully, truly, justly absolved from the guilt of what he has done, be as though he had not done it. How can all this be? The answer is that God elected His dearly beloved Son and chose Him to be His servant, and the dearly beloved and only begotten Son of God voluntarily became this, and undertook to descend from heaven and to assume our nature, and in that nature to have imputed to Him our guilt, and receive into Himself the

fulness of our death, that thereby we might be delivered, and this is so important, such a foundation of all gospel deliverance, that without it there can be no deliverance, and this is such an amazing truth as that when opened, all who see it by divine teaching, see the Trinity honoured in the salvation of the church. Remember that the fulness of death was taken from the church and passed over to her Surety. Remember that the Son of God incarnate placed Himself in precisely the condition of all the people given to Him by the Father to redeem, and if we believe this by the teaching of the Spirit, then one chief concern will be this in our hearts, it will live till satisfied, namely did this blessed One, this devoted Jesus, devote Himself for us? Offer Himself without spot to God for us? Stand in exactly our condition? Not feel some pity, but come with all the sympathy of eternal love, and all the merit of His meritorious and wondrous Person, and all the merit of His blessed death, into exactly the condition of the people He was sent to redeem. That is no redemption that does not redeem, and Jesus did redeem. "I will preserve Thee". Men shall hate Thee. Thou shalt be abhorred of nations. Thou shalt be a servant of rulers. Thou shalt be delivered to death, and in Thy humiliation Thy judgement shall be taken away from Thee, and Thou shalt be so oppressed with affliction as that Thy very body shall sympathise with Thy soul's agony, and every pore of Thy body shall express its sympathy by the oozing blood, that in great drops fall to the ground, but I will preserve Thee, and when wrath to the uttermost is poured upon Thee, I will preserve Thee." And this is the acceptable time in which God heard His Son. This is the day of salvation in which His Son was accepted. This is the time when the Trinity, and holiness Divine, and justice Divine, and the threatenings of the law, and the curse of the law, and all the behests of the law, and all the claims of the law on man, all met, met on the cross, met in this Person, and claimed at His hands everything that was requisite for the deliverance and the salvation and the glorification of the church, and have got from Him all they asked. Death was swallowed up in victory. The grave was spoiled, death was plagued. Every perfection of Deity was harmonised and honoured. and the strictest justice and the sweetest mercy now go hand in hand. My beloved friends, this is heaven. Here let me quote what I often have quoted to you from Luther "Doctrine", said that great reformer, "doctrine is heaven", and this is the doctrine - salvation wrought out, death swallowed up, victory obtained, wrath removed, suffered. The covenant of grace shines here, sealed with that precious blood which the Saviour so freely shed. That is the opening of a prison. Now the bearing, the intimate bearing that this has on true religion and experience, I shall try to show. When the time, the set time comes for a person to receive what the scripture calls a new

heart, to be as the scripture speaks, sprinkled with clean water; when the time comes, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, that a sinner should receive the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, that person is found in this prison, that is to say, in sin, held fast there, and you know that wonderful description of the case that the Apostle gives in the Ephesians - "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins wherein," that is in sin, "in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". Here is the creation of faith. Here is the implantation of a new life. Here is the beginning of grace and of glory when that washing of regeneration takes place in the soul, when a radical change takes place, a new heart is given, a new principle is infused and the sinner lives. "Thy time was a time of love. I passed by thee, I spread My skirt over thee, and thy time was a time of love and I said unto thee, 'live'" That was in the sweetest way though not sweet to be the subject of it. That was the beginning of the blessed work, the beginning of the sinner going forth out of his prison house. He is no longer under the dominion of sin who is born again. He is no longer the willing subject of the devil, who is born again. Now he is brought to a halt in the ways of sin, and to consider his latter end, and there are two great subjects which occupy his mind, and they are, first God. He sees God, and God becomes very great to him; he has to do with Him so to speak. There are mutual dealings now between this great God and the great sinner. The sinner finds a hand on him; he thinks, he feels it is for evil. He finds a hand on him from which he cannot get, and God finds a sinner at His footstool who often in his feelings would live there and find mercy, and these two, between whom there will be eternally a dis-proportion, and between whom now, in the sinner's sense of it, there is an infinite disparity, these two have dealings with each other, only the sinner is bound, and here I must bring in another thing. He is bound now and is in prison by the law. The law comes to him, claims him and to his feeling curses him. As it is written, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" This is his prison. He is held fast in it, and the dismay, the fear, the bondage, the conviction, the sense of wrath, the feeling of sin, the awful prospect - the judgement seat looming in the distance, and perhaps not far away to his apprehension. These things every child of God in some measure knows sooner or later. His language is "Woe is me, woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," and the great reason for all that lamentation was this, "for I have seen the Lord". "I have seen the Lord." Ah, my friends, the

light of God let into a soul, discovers to that soul, soul corruption, and that by reflection discovers the corruption that surrounds the soul. "I have seen the Lord" Solemn sight to the sinner. Awful sight, issuing in blessedness. Here is the prison; here is the prisoner, condemned and justly, and in his conscience he has a two fold sentence. The sentence of God, and the sentence of his own heart and understanding. God says cursed and the sinner says I am justly cursed. This is understood by some, and I wish it may please God to cause those of you who do not understand it, to come well into is that you may understand it.

Now a word about this blessed Lord Jesus coming to a prisoner, to this prisoner, and saying to him "Go forth" There is a religion that makes a noise about a person. There is a voice that speaks unto a person "Go forth" This is what is needed. It is nothing less than the gospel, spoken with power by the Holy Ghost. Nothing less than God graciously coming. The mystery of godliness here. God manifested in the flesh, and saying to him "Go forth", go forth from the curse, go forth from his hard bondage, from his dismal fears, from his sinking guilt, from his painful dismay at the sight and sense of what he is; he is to go forth from these evil things, his guilt, his woe, his misery, his bondaged feelings. Well dear friends, it is a great thing. May the beauty and sweetness of it be brought home. But where is this person to go? If he goes out of prison, he must go somewhere. Where is he to go? Not to the world. Says the Apostle - "We have received not the spirit of the world". Well he is to go to God. He is to go to God in his sweet experience - Now ye are come to Mount Zion where liberty is, and this person shall say with others "Come let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord, and He will teach us of His ways ... and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God." So he goes to God. Sweet is the access given to him; he prayed while in prison, who could not think it, prayer often. Now he gets into what Paul expresses to the Ephesians "For through Him", that is the Mediator, the Saviour, who was given for a covenant, "through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". Naturally, we understand what access means. When the chapel doors were opened for this service, you came to them and you found them open, and you had access to this building, and when God is pleased to say to a sinner "Go forth", there is an open door set before him. "I have set before thee an open door", and you get into the very gracious presence of God in the Mediator. Ah, and it never can be well or adequately described, the liberty, the awe, the sweetness, the sense of pardon, the removal of guilt from the conscience, the breaking of a heart that was hard, and the bringing into captivity of every thought unto the obedience of Christ. You must understand this by experience to

believe that it can be, it is so wonderful. Here is a smiling God and here is a wondering sinner. Here is a blessing God, and here is a receiving vessel. Here is a living fountain and here is a vessel that was so polluted and dirty and altogether forbidding as that he used to think God could only honour Himself in his condemnation, and now this vessel of mercy receives flowing rivers of peace and love and life and comfort and goodness. He gets access. He pours out his heart in gratitude, and his petitions for mercy continually when brought to this blessed place. God is the end of his faith. The end of his faith is the salvation of his soul. God in Christ now becomes this person's Friend for ever. One may say - I have thought at times that I have had access, but I have never had full forgiveness. I have thought at times my prayers ascended and that the Lord God of Sabaoth heard them, but I have never had full answers. Well, I will say this to you, the answers are waiting. You wait for God, and He waits to be gracious. "Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry", and it will be so. You will find that the great and blessed One who has the keys of hell and of death will yet come to you, and say in your heart the effectual word "Go forth". O, but I am corrupt. So was Lazarus literally, as you feel to be spiritually, but Jesus Christ gave him life, new life, and when he came forth out of the grave bound with grave clothes, then went the commandment forth - "Loose him" Take off these binding things and let him go, and that liberty in the spirit awaits all who cry in their captivity. "The captive exilē hasteneth that he may be loosed". You are in the house of restraint now, but the day will come when the doors of their own accord will fly open, and there will be no hindrance to your going forth, for when Christ sets before a man the open door, none can shut it. He goes to God, nay he goes to his Father as the prodigal went to his father, as they of old went for whom the prophet Hosea spoke. They said by that prophet - "In Thee," that is God, "in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." They go to a divine fulness, fulness of love, of redemption. "With Thee is plenteous redemption," and they go to that and get a measure of it. They go to the fountain of light.- "With Thee is the fountain of light. In Thy light shall we see light". That makes them cry out "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles." "Go forth" Ah, devil, he cannot keep the prisoner. Sin cannot keep the prisoner. The world cannot keep the prisoner. Fear and trouble and felt danger and evil are unable to detain their captive; he goes forth. He goes to the Saviour who has come to him, and he knew not that the Saviour was coming to him, but now that the Saviour has come to him, he goes to the Saviour. "Ye are come unto Jesus, come to Mount Zion and have come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant". This is a great thing. This is the movement of faith, the act of faith, the eye of faith, and when one in divine power comes to Jesus he gets, he receives, a welcome that amazes and melts him.

What! this done to me who am so vile? This given to me the worst of sinners? Yes, you will feel with Rutherford - "I did not love Him but He would love me" and when you get that then you love Him in return as one expresses your feelings - "Loved of my God for Him again, with love intense I'd burn, chosen of Thee e'er time began, I choose Thee in return". Ye are come to Jesus, the Friend of sinners, Jesus, who receiveth sinners and eateth with them. The light of life, the righteousness of the guilty, the sanctification of the polluted, the life of the dead, bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty. A large land in which there is plenty of room for those who have been in prison and can appreciate liberty, "for they shall walk up and down in His name", saith the Lord. It is a large land. All divine perfections, all human excellency, infinite merit, to walk up and down in, when you come to Jesus. "Come unto Me", He says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Come to Me and you shall live". Eat my flesh and drink my blood and you shall die no more. "Come unto Me". I am annointed to preach glad tidings to you, meek ones, and to bind up your broken hearts, to proclaim liberty to your captive souls, to give you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." O it is great to come to Jesus. When one is brought here, he is brought from his orphanage, from his being alone, from his being cut off from God, brought into union and brought to Him who is their elder brother and when this man, this poor creature, who was prisoner, gets the sweet spirit of adoption, then he realises that he is a child of God, and if a child, then an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, and his faith looks into the beauties and riches of the Person of Christ, and into the fullness of Christ, and sees that all that he can possibly need, and more than he ever can ask, Christ possesses. "Go forth." Go forth to the Holy Ghost your Teacher for all the rest of your days. Your guide into the knowledge of the Person of Christ, into the knowledge of the truth. Your helper in prayer and supplication, the inspirer of your petitions; go to Him. In prison you felt that you had Him not, you felt you deserved not to have Him. Go forth to Him with no more worthiness in yourself, but go forth to Him who in the covenant of grace is promised, promised distinctly, promised by Jesus Christ. "He" says Christ, of the Spirit, shall be with you and dwell in you. "He" when you know not what to pray for, shall help your infirmities; when you feel staggering under a burden, shall come alongside of you and help you to bear the burden. He shall annoint and teach you, and make those strange, sweet, soft motions in your heart, and be the author of thus praying, and urging to prayer. He shall be in you as the quickener of your soul from the frequent deaths that threaten and that do lay their hand on you; He shall come and glorify Him and now the sinner has to go to this Spirit, and says to Him sometimes "O dwell in me, fill

all my soul, and all my powers by Thine control." And so the children of the Most High God go to the Trinity; cut off by sin, they are united by grace. Dead in sin, they are quickened into divine life. Blest with justification, they go forth from their guilt and their bondage to the Divine Being in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Well my brethren, this means heaven. He who gets this liberty is on the way to heaven. Heaven is awaiting him. He is preserved for it. His right is often disputed by enemies - Satan and guilt. It is often doubted by himself, but neither one or the other shall invalidate this, his right, and hinder him in his claim to it at all times. He goes to the Trinity. Did you ever get to the Trinity? Did you ever get five minutes access to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost? O if you did, that five minutes will expand into Eternity and the sense of bliss you then had will grow, yea, and the very image of the glory of God you are destined to wear, and more, you wear it now in your soul. "We all" says Paul, to the Corinthians "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." So may it be with us. Amen.