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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham

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ISAIAH 50 v 4

“The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth my ear to hear the learned”.

Christ, speaking here, asks a question respecting the casting off of His people. “Thus saith the Lord. Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?” Convincing questions, for when He came, He came to His own and His own received Him not. He rose up early and sent His prophets to the disobedient people and they heard not, heeded not. They killed some, others they stone, and others they treated shamefully. Then He said, having one only Son, I will send Him, and when He came unto His own, His own received Him not. They clave to Moses, not knowing that Moses had said by divine inspiration – “A prophet like unto me the Lord will raise up unto you; Him shall ye hear” and every soul that will not hear Him shall be cut off, shall die. This prophet, thus promised, came and they rejected Him, preferred a robber and a murderer. Of Jesus they said “Away with Him, away with Him”. And so the truth is this – “Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. Wherefore when I came was there no man?” He came in His prophets, then He came in His own Person, and none would answer. Just a few disciples were omnipotently called: the rest despised and rejected Him, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. “Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” They said He was a poor man, Joseph’s son: they wondered where He got His learning. “Have I no power to deliver?” Am I just a helpless poor man that you esteem Me to be? “Behold at My rebuke I dry up the sea” – as He did to make a way for Israel to pass over on dry land – “I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering”, by which He

tries His people, for when God makes darkness His pavilion to any of His people then they are in trouble. "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering". If this be the present experience of any of you people of God, wait on Him. Do not say, as Jacob of old mistakenly said - "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God". Wait on Him. You may have terror, many fears, much confusion, and wonder how the scene will end, but wait on God. "When men are cast down it shall be said there is lifting up and He will save the humble person". Clouds come, but the wind drives them away. God's providence and God's Spirit drive away the dark clouds. Then He says - "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned". "Behold My Servant" it is asked, or commanded in this prophecy, "Behold My Servant whom I uphold, Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him." This is the stem out of the root of Jesse; this is Jesus Christ; and the words of grace which were poured into His lips just are these having His ear opened morning by morning that He may attend to the cases that are brought to Him. The humbleness of Jesus is very striking; a willing Servant. "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister". And if He ministers to you, any of you, you will bless Him for it. His ministry to you will be wells of waters out of which you will draw salvation. The tongue of the learned is a tongue that has somewhat to utter, in particular cases. The learned Advocate - "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous". The tongue of the learned is the tongue of the Intercessor, and we have an ever living Intercessor, living always after the power of an endless life, able, in that intercession, to save all that come unto God by Him. This tongue of the learned expresses that God did speak to Christ, His Elect, in the covenant of peace and tell Him what He was to say when He was incarnate. Striking is this, as Christ Himself says, "I speak not my own words but the words of Him that sent Me". "I do not My own works but the works that I have seen My Father do". This is the position of Jesus Christ, the Servant of the Most High God, and you have it in the Revelation, in the opening of that wonderful Book. "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him". A Person in the Trinity, He needed no teaching; He could receive no words to utter; all that God has He has and He eternally had. But, sent to save the lost, He had words given to Him. Sent to comfort the feeble-minded, He had words given to Him. Sent to save poor sinners, He had

words to teach them. Thus is this word, as I judge, to be understood. "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary". No haphazard work; no attempt to save; no effort to do good; but God's Servant to do the work He was appointed and sent to do and to utter the words which were given to Him to utter. And a particular object is before us - "Him that is weary". How many people here are weary in the sense of this word? The body may be weary, the mind may be weary from exercise and burdens in providence, anxieties in business, and in the family. Plenty of that kind of weariness without any word spoken to the weary in the sense of this text. What is this weariness? Weariness comes from exertion, from burdens, from exercises, from God's dealings by His Spirit with the conscience. And this weariness may be expressed first - the weariness of a sinner in the beginning of a work of grace under the law. It is called the ministration of death, the ministration of condemnation. And if you are under that ministration you must be weary. You try to find God and cannot. You try to help yourself, and fail. You try to walk in the way commanded and you go astray, till you have no strength, till God sees that there is no helper and no strength in you, and then He pities you. People are weary by the exercise of their souls under the law. Bondage is bitter; bondage is wearying; the yoke is cruel. As a yoke on the neck, bending the body, so is the yoke of the law, and the yoke of sin felt under the law; utterly wearying, wearing out the poor creature who is in that condition. Perhaps some here answer to this; you are in bondage under the law. It is a master, a task master. It is telling you what you ought to be, and proving that you are not that. It is telling you what you should do, and proving that you have no power to do it. This brings you into bondage. That is one weariness of which here we may take particular notice. Any of you in this case are directed by the Lord to look unto Christ and ask Him to speak that word of the everlasting gospel to your hearts so that your weariness will cease in that particular. May you do so in your hearts, by His Spirit. When you get rest in Christ by the gospel, that will remove your present weariness. When you come to Him, when the Spirit applies the blood of Christ to you, then you will find all that legal bondage, which has worn your spirit out and made you understand what it is to be under the ministration of condemnation, will cease. You have passed from under the rod into the bond of the covenant. One word I

would say here, the Lord keep you from divorcing yourself from the law. The Lord keep you from pretending to be married to Christ before your first husband is dead. How many professors there are who profess to be joined, and have joined themselves, to the Lord, who are nothing better in Scripture language than adulterers. "Know ye not" says Paul to the Romans "I speak to them that know the law, how that the law hath dominion over a woman as long as her husband liveth". God keep you in prayer for liberty, teach you to cry to Him for liberty; keep your eye, if it has at all been directed to the Lord Jesus, on Him. Pray to Him, wait for Him, wait for His coming, and when He fulfils the promises of the gospel in you, then you will say in that day "Praise the Lord". Why? "Thou wast angry with me but Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortest me". Then you will draw water of refreshment from the wells of salvation. Then you will walk in the ways of the Lord. Then you will find the law of Zion which proceedeth from that blessed house which is built on the top of the mountains. You will walk according to grace, in grace and by grace. The gospel will be the word of the learned in your heart.

Secondly there is a weariness in every child of God, as long as he is kept lively, from the labour he is engaged in against and under indwelling sin. This is hard labour; Paul found it to be so. He said "When I would do good evil is present with me". He describes this labour in the Galatians. "The flesh lusteth" willeth, urgeth, "against the Spirit" and that brings the soul into sore conflict. I would do good, but cannot. I would believe, but unbelief hinders me. I would pray, but prayerlessness, natural to me, hinders me, prevents me. I would love the Lord but my native enmity rises. I would be at peace with Him, but when providential things are crooked, or I get no answers, then I am ready to quarrel with Him. And this issues in weariness. Every Christian has more or less an experience of this. O that I could believe the Lord, that I could believe in hope against hope, that I could glorify God in believing that He will fulfil every promise He has made, make good every word He has uttered, then all would be well with me. But this is not the case always. It is occasionally the case but not always. So a man with this conflict with indwelling sin is often weary. No bed for him; no rest for him. The boiling, I think that is not too strong a word, the boiling corruptions of human nature in every child of God occasionally cause

him utter weariness. He knows not what to do. He would cast himself on the Lord without reservation, but is hindered. Now Jesus Christ understands this case. He had no sin, He did no sin; guile was not in His mouth; but He had the burden of sin, imputed sin. No heart can conceive what He suffered under the burden of the sins of the Church imputed to Him, but He laboured under that, under that load. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Under that He cried "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Under that He had the sword of infinite justice called upon to awake against Him and to smite Him. Under that the sun of His Father's smile was hidden from His soul. Therefore He is able to succour these weary people in that He Himself hath suffered. The tongue of the learned is here used to comfort these weary people. One word is "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace," and that, though it does not remove the terrible principle of sin, assures the believer that the sin which is in him shall not prevail against him to his destruction. What a word that is. It comes out of His fulness of grace; it comes out of this divine commission and instruction that the Man Christ Jesus had, and the man, the child of God to whom it is spoken, will understand something of that astonishment that the people did when Christ opened His ministry. "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth", and you will wonder at the graciousness of the Lord Jesus when He lets you know that that enemy that you have in your heart, that you carry about with you, which you cannot conquer by yourself, that plagues you, that seeks to reign over you, that that very enemy is under the power of Christ, that grace shall conquer in you, even as Jesus conquered for you when He said "It is finished". O tried child of God, indwelling sin is a chained foe. No further can it go than it is permitted but it will wear out all the creature goodness, all fleshly religion, all hope in self. It will wear the sinner out until he says "I am lost, I am lost doubly. Lost in my nature and lost now in my experience. Then the sweet, the powerful grace of Jesus in some gospel teaching, some divine word, will give relief to the weary, rest to the weary, and the weary will say

Meanwhile that foe can't boast of much
That makes me watch and pray

and the sinner will bless God the Holy Ghost for directing his faith to the Lord Jesus who says "Sin shall not have dominion".

This weary person may be found saying - "O, how shall I get through, how shall I stand?" Jesus says in the gospel - "Because I live ye shall live also". "In the world ye shall have tribulation" and this is a good part of the tribulation, indwelling sin and its working. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world". To the young believer this is one of the most perplexing of all, the weariness that he feels. If I am a child of God, why am I thus? If I have grace, how is it that I am so wicked? Not in open practice, but in the workings of indwelling sin. Wait on God, He has got a good word for you.

There is another weariness. It is weariness induced by affliction, by the trial of faith, "the trial of your faith which is much more precious than gold though it be tried by fire". Of the three noble confessors cast into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar, we find this, there was a fourth with them and the fourth was like unto the the Son of God. And of these three confessors we read "they quenched the violence of fire". They did not put it out; you wont put the fire out; but you will live in it. Affliction will be a wearying thing like a fire threatening your life but you, though not quenching it, will live in it. And the sweetest of all sweet breathing is in that furnace when Christ walks with you. He says "Fear not; when thou walkest through the fire the flame shall not kindle upon you". You are burnt, burnt to ashes in your feelings, burnt to ashes as to any hope of getting better naturally, but this flame, though it lays hold of these combustibles in you, shall not consume the life of God nor the righteousness of Christ nor the holiness of Christ given to you by the Spirit. So there is comfort; Christ comforts. He comes to people in the fire and says "Fear not". He comes to them when they are cast into some dungeon in their affliction and draws near to them and says "Fear not". When they are weary and like worms "Fear not worm Jacob". When they are afraid of their enemies, He says "The Lord shall fight for you. Ye need not fight in this battle." O the kind words He speaks. He says "I am with thee Israel passing through the fire". "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". "I am thy God". "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth

for I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour. There is no God, I know not any". And this word given to Him to speak, the learning given to the Man Christ Jesus, when the Spirit of God filled Him without measure, this is that which He uses. It is nothing less than the everlasting gospel and bits of it, it I may use such an expression, bits of it, in promises, in sweet gracious undertaking for you, He speaks. Nobody knows, but the people who get them, what the words of Christ are in their suitableness, in their sweetness, in their efficacy, stilling the mind, quieting the spirit, enabling the soul to say by faith, "What time I am afraid I will trust in the Lord". Now some of you would lie against your right if you denied having had such words spoken to you.

"Speak a word in season". The season is the need, the time when you could not get on without it. It is not a word in season when the gospel truth is uttered to a professor and it makes no impression on him for he does not need it, but it is a word in season to one who says "What shall I do Lord? Save or I perish. This fire will consume unless it pleases Thee to enable me by Thy presence to walk through it.

Another word in season is the word that Jesus speaks to tempted souls. Christ can sympathise with tempted sinners. He endured the presence of that foul, fallen spirit, the devil, in the wilderness. It was not for nothing; it was not for His own personal instruction but for instruction, that is to say, that He should be well acquainted with temptation in order to succour them that are tempted. Temptation is a real thing, a painful thing, a piercing sword. Temptation is darkness and confusion. Temptation is a power to incline the mind in wrong directions. Temptation is sent to fill the soul with wrong thoughts, wrong, foul imaginations, and there are two ends the tempter has in view. One is to blaspheme God, and the other is to destroy the tempted ones. O how he tried the Lord Jesus but he found nothing in Him. "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me". But he finds plenty in the saints; very combustible matter he finds to which he may apply the match of temptation. Temptation is various but always distressing to a pure minded child of God. I say pure minded; there is a purity of mind in the people of God. Peter says "I stir up your pure mind". Now to this pure mind,

what a bitterness it is to be tempted to unclean things. To a lover of God, what a bitterness it is to be tempted to tempt God and to blaspheme. To a humble mind, how terrible it is to be tempted to walk in pride. To a believer, it is exceedingly painful to be tempted to presumption, to presume upon God, instead of waiting upon Him. And Jesus endured this temptation. "In all points He was tempted as we are yet without sin". And He has good words and comfortable words to speak to tempted people. It is a beautiful passage that Paul has in the Hebrews (2 v 18) "Wherefore He is able to succour them that are tempted in that He Himself suffered being tempted". O tempted soul, you have One near you - you may not apprehend His presence sometimes - you have One near you into whose lips His eternal Father poured gracious words, that He might pour them into your distressed soul, into your distracted mind.

"The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season". "A word spoken in season how good it is, like apples of gold in pictures of silver." A suitability, a wonderful fitness, and an efficacy. The gospel is always efficacious when it is spoken by the Lord Jesus. He never makes a mistake. He just speaks it to the sinner as the sinner stands in need.

"To him that is weary". You who have been tempted, how wearying is temptation. I have been worn out by temptation, weary, unable to move or hold on under the power of temptation. So have some of you. But then Christ has spoken to us, has He not. Has He not said "I am with you", when you said "Lord be with me". He said so to me. When you say "Bless me", He says "Surely in blessing I will bless thee". You need not to fight in this battle. Only take this weariness of your soul to the Lord Jesus. He will help you sometimes to say to Him, "Thou knowest Lord, this is not my will. I would not have this if I could avoid it. Look upon me, deliver me. There is a weariness that some suffer with respect to prayer. Prayer given by God is put into the fire or rather, one may say, it is tried by delay. You may have entreated a particular thing of the Lord, and He may even have given you blessed intimations that He indited that prayer and that He would answer that prayer, and you may have made a mistake thinking that now it was to be fulfilled all but immediately. But divine wisdom said

"No, this must be tried". Some promise also may be connected with this trial as in the case of Joseph. He had intimations from God; He had that from God which made him believe in the future of his history, believe that the sheaves around him would rise and bow to him and make obeisance. You may have had sweet expectations raised when you have been in prayer, and some gracious promises have been given to you. Now you have looked for their fulfilment and it has not come. It may not have come even yet, and you have been ready to say, "I made a mistake; I am afraid I stole what was not given to me". You may think that God now will be angry with you for having stolen His word, and you take this to the Lord by prayer and supplication. "Forgive me if I did take it, an ungiven word. Forgive me for hoping in it if Thou didst not speak it to me. And in the course of time you get quite worn out with it, you are a weary soul. He says "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest". He may instruct you in that Scripture by Peter, "Beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day", and you may say to yourself, O how foolish I have been to measure the Lord's time by my own. How ignorant I have been, not thinking how patient God is, and that there is no time with Him. One eternal now with regard to His purposes and with regard to the fulfilling of His promises to His people. But now Christ comes and drops in some word that is good to your soul. "Be not ignorant of this one thing". Yea, He says of Joseph, "Until the time that His word came: the word of the Lord tried him". That is to say, the promises which he had had, being put into the fire, were very tried promises and his faith was a tried faith, tried by the fire, but God is faithful. Remember, if you can, God is faithful; He will not forget His word. Put Him in mind of it as He tells you to do. Remember this, He says "Put Me in mind of the promise that I have given you".

"The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak", how to overcome unbelief, how to meet the enemy, how to encourage the poor, cast down soul, how to turn the eye away from the enemy, from present depressions, turn the eye to Him who is faithful, who alone will do it.

And one more word and I close. To him that is weary with respect to his sin bought mortality. You who are younger may hardly

understand this except as you will feel that in this sin bought mortality of yours there are seeds of disease and of death. But as men get older they come into the word of God experimentally and they find that the burden of mortality is heavy and it is wearisome. Now God speaks a kind word to those; He has spoken it to some of His people in all ages. It is this - "Because I live ye shall live also". Absent from the body, present with the Lord. The grave is not to be the grave of all hope. O no. Christ is in heaven and He says this "Where I am there shall My servant also be". O what an animating word that has been to me. "Where I am". There, says the soul, I would be, and Christ says, you shall be there. No sin, no devil, no trouble, no fiery trial shall keep you from this inheritance. "Where I am there shall My servant also be".

"He awakeneth morning by morning, He awakeneth My ear to hear as the learned". As it were, as if He should say, whenever there is a case, there is Christ ready for it. Whenever there is a trouble, there is Christ ready for it to minister. Wherever there is a need, there is the Lord Jesus with a supply. O the greatness, the suitableness, the blessedness, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ made known by the Holy Ghost, first in the Scripture and then in every individual soul needing Him, needing His remedies, His good works, His comfortable words. What do some of you see? Little or no hope? Well the Lord does not depend on that. His coming to you, His speaking to you, do not depend on that. You may limit Him, but He will not be limited at the time appointed for His coming. Wait on Him, turn to this blessed One. Are you in darkness? He says "I create the light". Think of it. May the Lord graciously enable us to believe in this great One, this Servant of the Most High God, who received a revelation from His Father and words that He should speak to weary souls. O the love Christ has to weary sinners. Never, never can it be adequately expressed, but His heart is toward them, His affections are on them, His intentions are to save them and to bring them honourably to their graves.

May the Lord help us to believe it and to wait on Him until He is pleased to say "Behold Me, behold Me."

AMEN.