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Sermon preached by Mr. J.K. Popham
on Sunday evening, 19th. June, 1932

Text: Isaiah 56 verses 6 & 7.

"Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant:

Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

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Our time was kept this morning in considering the first of these two verses. Very beautiful is this first verse of the text. The sons of strangers, - Gentile sinners, - miserable creatures. Without the covenant, without God, having no hope. That is the divine description of Gentiles by the Holy Ghost in Ephesians, but these come in the typical church by submitting to the ordinances of God in respect of them, (with which you are acquainted as readers of the Bible). And these leaving their idolatries, "join themselves to the Lord" in His ordered worship. This means spiritually, that Gentiles who are born again, leave the world, abandon themselves, take up their cross and follow Christ. Faith is, in this business, that faith which is the gift of God; wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. You will never properly join yourselves to Christ unless you have this great thing - faith, and when you do this by faith, you will find what you have just been singing, to be wonderfully true, - "Christ is the Friend of sinners." He receives sinners. When you join yourself to Him O sinner, you will find His merciful hand stretched out to take hold of you and pull you in "to serve Him", which as we noticed this morning, is really to be brought into captivity; every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Obedience to the faith is the best service you can ever render to God. "And to love the name of the Lord." That beautiful, that pure grace, though often weak and mixed with things, or surrounded by things that are wrong, that

love to the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord when sounded in the heart, begets love. You could not hear the name of Jesus Christ in your heart and not love Him. We, many of us, do hear it when we read it and have no love to Him, but whenever the Holy Ghost speaks that name on the heart of a sensible sinner, then he loves the Lord Jesus; then he can sincerely sing -

"Jesus, I love Thy charming name;
'Tis music in my ear."

"To be His servants." - "Ye were the servants of sin." Says the Spirit, by Paul to the Romans, "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered." The text reads - "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you," but the marginal reading, given as the Greek reading, is "whereto ye were delivered." Like a mould and molted metal. The molten metal run into it, taking the shape of the mould. Whether you know what that is, God knows. That is the only way of having the image of Christ upon you. Then, what Paul writes again to the Romans becomes a sweet thing - "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ----- that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

"That keepeth the sabbath from polluting it" - which means cessation from your own works. God rested from His works and sanctified the sabbath, and every child of God does this in his spirit, when there is a real cessation in his heart from trying to obey the law; from trying to cut off some sins, to cast out some evils and to walk according to the law. You pollute the sabbath when you do that, but you keep it without polluting it when you "Cease from your own works bad or good." "Let us," says Paul to the Hebrews, "labour to enter into that rest." Labour to cease from labouring! "And taketh hold of My covenant," - which is done by faith.

Now it is said of these strangers, that, "Even them will I bring to My holy mountain," - which is a type of the church of God,

so, - 'I will bring them into My church.' The eunuch shall not say I am a dry tree and fruit bearing is impossible to me. The stranger shall not say that the Lord has separated me from His people. Both of them shall not put themselves in the church, but shall be brought by God to be the members of the mystical body of Christ. Bone of His bone; flesh of His flesh and members of His body in particular, which means more than the visible church, although the visible church is included. 'I will bring these to My holy mountain.' Holiness is the wall round about the city. Holiness is the character of God's church. It is said, as you know, in the chapter which I read - the second of Isaiah - that this mountain, with the house of the Lord upon it, shall be "in the top of the mountains". Right above the whole world, - that is what it is. A mountain for eminence. The church - eminent; made up of obscure members; Gentile dogs; inconsiderable people in the world; counted as "the offscouring of all things"; men, if they are seen, are seen only to be "wondered at" - without a name. Men of whom we may say, if they meet the public eye, they meet the public scorn, because they have a religion that the public cannot understand, therefore cannot receive. But there is a mark on these people, a kind of unassumed, unthought of nobility that grace begets, and yet, an irritating separation from the world. Many people of God have found it so. Some in service, some perhaps in eminent places, not living according to their station as men should think, have felt the scorn of the world. These, God brings into His church, - eminent, and a mountain for security, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

The "gates of hell", - meaning the devils in consultation against the saints. How have these gates tried some of you! There are two ways the devil has, generally speaking, of tempting people, - the people of God. First by a subtlety. You may not know you are being tempted at times. A kind of subtlety - perhaps religious subtlety. Perhaps a "little one" - no harm in the "little one." Perhaps a secret indulgence in some things that do not appear to be evil. The subtlety of the devil is constantly being repeated against the church of the living God. O beware of things that appeal to a tender affection in you. Beware of the generality that may appeal to your generosity in religion. Beware of everything that has a tendency to deaden prayer and blunt your feelings of the fear of God, making Him

not so great as He has been to, and in you. I am disposed to say that the subtle temptations of the devil are more to be feared than his violence. Violent temptations in a sense are known, but they come against a weak faith, - a weak soul - and are likely to carry it away sometimes into forbidden things, but these shall not prevail against the church, really. "The gates of hell shall not prevail". Christ is their defence. Christ is their comforter. Christ is their protector and it is written that He shall bruise Satan shortly under their feet. A great word that! That has been to some of us, a very, very sweet word. He "shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". The time may be long when we suffer, but it is a short thing with God. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". Bunyan concluded, on reviewing his experience of that terrible temptation - "Sell Him", that it arose from his neglect of that word, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". My dear friends, the Lord help you and help me to beware of the tempter. "Be sober ...". Do not think, because you have had a good experience, you are secure from his assaults. "Be sober ..." Reckon that you have to do with a tempter who will never tire and who, if he succeeds not in one way, will attempt another way. "Be sober, be vigilant ..." Be on your watch tower and cry mightily to God that you may not fall a prey to the tempter. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour".

A "mountain" - for beauty. How great is that beauty which Jesus Christ gives to His people. How great is His beauty. The beauty of His Person, the beauty of His work, the beauty of His salvation, the beauty of His free eternal love, of His vicarious death, and this is upon the "top of the mountains". High above all hills of human excellence. People do not know what the church is, they are so feeble, and there are always some enemies saying, "What do these feeble Jews?" They repair the wall, but if only a fox should go up on the wall it would break it down. "What do these feeble Jews?" They did one thing, if I may for the moment turn aside to this. They did this on their return from the captivity. The first thing they did was to build the altar, and set it up on its bases and for sacrifice. You will be strong if you do that in the spirit. But this mountain has beauty, "beautiful for situation", yet to be, "the joy of the whole earth". God's beauty, Christ's

beauty, the Spirit's beauty, the beauty of the one eternal God; and to this mountain the Lord brings Gentiles who were strangers and aliens from the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Then He says He will make them joyful.

"And make them joyful in My house of prayer." What is this joy? "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you." What is the joy of Christ? The joy of Christ that was set before Him, that enabled Him to endure the cross, was having His church with Him, but this was His joy as I judge, on that particular occasion, even the joy of His victory. He made an end of sin. He cast it away. He removed all the guilt of it; He slew the power of it: He was the victor for His people, and shall be the conqueror in them, and this is the joy. The Father's provision was the joy of Christ, so it is your joy when you get a divine smile, I say, a divine smile. You cannot express it, but it is in you. It is a breath from heaven, a sweet health giving invigorating wind of the Holy Ghost. A sense that is inexpressible, of a peace in your conscience, a peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; a sense of being accepted in the Beloved; of being one of God's favourites, one of His dear children, one of His sheep, one after whom He will look, of whom He will take care, whom He will defend: whom He will bless, and to whom He makes that great promise, "That where I am, there ye may be also." Perhaps joy is almost a stranger today, to most of the Lord's people. We have grown so carnal, have become so worldly, that some of the greatest manifestations of His love are in reproving, rebuking. I speak what I know for myself in this matter. It is very solemn. O were there prisons and smarting feet from the stripes; were there stocks for the feet, there would be more songs. Paul and Silas sang songs in the night with their imprisoned feet and their smarts. O how smarting they were, and yet they sang songs; they sang to the Lord. The high praises of God were in their mouth, and I am sure some of you know, that some of your best times have grown out of your worst times. Some of your sweetest songs have been the fruit of your bitterest trials. The Lord has drawn very near to you in trouble, as He did in Jeremiah. When he was in the low dungeon the Lord drew very near and said to him, "fear not", and when you have been in some fear, he has drawn near to you and told you not to fear. Perhaps when you feared God, as it might have

appeared as approaching, then He may have said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Oh, the joy of believing that Christ is yours and you are His; that He has everlasting property in you and you have an everlasting portion in Him. The joy of believing that the Holy Ghost will never quite give you up, that He may for a season have been silent to you, yet He has heard your cry, "Be not silent to me", and He has come and spoken; whispered peace in your conscience, and when you have thought repeated afflictions were against you, He has drawn nigh and said, 'If you endure chastening you are My son.' Think of it - chastening against a child of God. Why, it is among the sweetest, though most painful, expressions of God's love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." We may well fear ease much more than trouble.

"Joyful" - in the covenant of which we have taken hold, - "taketh hold of My covenant." When the proselyte became a Jew, according to God's right, then he in that very conversion took hold of the national covenant, and its benefits and its blessings and its protection were his, and so, when by faith you lay hold of the covenant of grace and so join yourself to the Lord, there comes a sense of acceptance, and then you are joyful. This is a fruit that will not grow on nature's barren soil, but springs up in a minute, sometimes. You may think that being so barren, and for so long barren, it is impossible for you to bring forth fruit to the praise of God's glorious grace. All you need really, is to be dealt with as Aaron's rod was dealt with. A stick, my friends, no root. Carried. Did not go itself. Could not. Carried - with eleven other sticks before the Lord, and God's power came into that rod and caused it, in one night, to bud and bring forth blossom and yield almonds. That is all you need. O but it is a great thing to be taken hold of and led, before the Lord. Now when you get this, you will have joy. 'Make them joyful in My presence.' Yes, there is such a thing as experiencing the presence of God. When He walks with you and you, Enoch-like, walk with Him; when He reveals some secret to you and you reveal your heart to Him, tell Him your case and your exercises, and He lets down into your heart some gracious word, some divine smile, O it is like a summer, in a moment. A sweet breath from heaven, makes a summer. A smile fills you with holy happiness, with true humility. "And

make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar." Have you become a Jew - yes, in the spirit, not in the letter? Have you got sacrifices and offerings - yes, real sacrifices, burnt offerings? There is a holy fire comes down from heaven upon a sinner and what does it do for him? Purges away his dross and takes away his tin and his stubbornness, his self-will, his self-strength, his self-power; and he comes like a poor Gentile and offers himself. Paul speaks to the Romans about this and he says, "That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable", and the offering up of yourself, poor sinner, as a sinner - helpless in self, hopeless, you offer yourself up in the name and the merits of the Lord Jesus, pleading the infinite atonement, - and that acceptable sacrifice, God lets you know that He has accepted it. "I beseech you ----- by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." Then, you have given something up, - lost something. An eminent example of this, is the Apostle Paul, who in the Philippians, tells us what he did. It was all negative, but a blessed negative! Birth, pedigree - nothing; education - nothing; high privilege - nothing: acquirements - nothing. What a sacrifice! And this, says God, "shall be accepted upon Mine altar."

What is this altar? Mind the altar, my friends. Do not let it be one of your own making. No human tool was used with respect to the original altar. "Mine altar!" Well, what is it? The Lord Jesus Christ "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." We have a right to eat of it and a right to come to it - a right to offer upon it. May I say, that the cross of Christ is the best house of prayer, and the best place to rejoice in and the only place for offering acceptable sacrifices. One wonderful sacrifice God has given to some of us. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." You go as a poor proud creature and you wont be accepted. Go as a broken down sinner with sweet repentance, contrition and a broken heart, and I tell you this, the day will come when you will know to your great joy, that God accepted that offering. "The offering up of the Gentiles" - the sacrifice of the Gentiles. One promise is very great and beautiful, - "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land" - and - "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which

they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats", but this offering is different. It is a beautiful offering on a wonderful altar. "We have an altar." O that I could live at that Altar; that you could; that the Holy Ghost would come and bring us there and bind us there. 'I cannot get there,' says one. There is One who can take you there. "Them will I bring!" And how? "I drew them with cords of a Man, with bands of love." The cords of the sacred and suitable and wonderful humanity of the eternal Son of God. The bands of the love of God in Christ." These cast round your soul, have an invincible power; a drawing, not of violence, but a drawing, and yet a very great violence to our wicked nature.

"For Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." You do not pray if you have no need felt. People only really pray when they have real need, in their sins and their exercises. Prayer is just asking for what you feel to need, accompanied with adoration, for the approach of a sinner to God is the approach of an infinitely unworthy creature. The approach to a superior of an inferior; the approach of a law-breaker to the law-giver: but not only that, but the approach of a law-breaker to Him who made the law honourable by fulfilling it. When you have trouble about your soul, here is a house of prayer, poor sinner. When sin is on your conscience, here is a house of prayer; when you are tempted, here is a house of prayer; when you have great need, needs for your soul, needs for your position in providence, various needs coming, here is a house of prayer. "Mine house!" Ah, but we provoke the Lord sometimes to make a whip of small cords, and He comes to the house of a sinner and He sees tables of moneychangers and all sorts of merchandise. He uses the whip, He overturns the tables, disturbs the rest, stirs up the nest and brings poor people to say, 'What shall I do - what is to become of us?' Then He says, 'My house is not to be a den of thieves, but a "house of prayer for all people." Jew and Gentile, there now being no difference. Christ "hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." And prayer, not only for yourselves. Whenever there is a revival in the church of Christ, there will be a revival of knowledge and practice in the Scripture, which says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Let each seek his

brother's wealth. There is a commonwealth in Israel, members of His body. How many of you have real love for the saints and seek their good? How many of you seek an opportunity and would like sometimes even to make one, to give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple? Says Paul to the Ephesians, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto ----- for all saints." We want the Lord's blessing here. He alone knows the day and night fervour of some of us that His blessing may be here, but He has churches here and there and, says the Lord, "Pray one for another." Paul said to the saints, "Brethren, pray for us." An eminent saint and an apostle asks the prayers of God's people, and the prayer has a place. "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." All kinds of people, and these people for whom this house of prayer is, will all be gathered together one day, out of all nations and kindreds and tribes and tongues and people, and then it wont be prayer, it will be praise; praising God for His goodness in gathering us to Himself. Even this people who have left themselves and left their race and left their house and forgotten their father's house because the Lord had a desire to them, and would have them come to Him. Even these people who have "joined themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants." O I wish that I could make you understand, but I cannot, God must do it, the beauty of this word. O how it has shined in my heart! Joined to the Lord. - Taken hold of His covenant. Even such people He will bring to His holy mountain, high above all other mountains!

May the good God of all grace bring us to this wonderful place. This high mountain. Beautiful for situation, the joy of God. The joy of the whole earth that God creates.

Amen.