

(Evening - 10:00 P.M. P.S. 25)

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 19 June 1932

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Isaiah 56 v 6 and 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."

These verses express the love of God to some of all nations and kindreds and tongues and tribes and peoples who shall be gathered together by His Spirit and grace and who shall join themselves together to the Lord. The residue will encamp against the camp of the saints and fire will come down from heaven to consume them. Everyone that is made sensible of his danger out of Christ will really join himself to the Lord and choose these things that please Him; will see that there is no safety out of Christ, no security in any part of the universe but on that high and holy mountain of God; that though they may build, as they think, their nest in the stars, God will fetch them thence. How near to its end this present dispensation is, God alone knows exactly, but there are not wanting signs that it is near to us, nearer perhaps than anyone here thinks and nearer than some would like to think even though there be signs of it. Nations will be gathered together by God's judgment in providence that His indignation may be poured out upon them. O you young people, listen to me if you can when I tell you that unless you be secured in Christ, unless you, by faith, take hold of the covenant of grace, and choose these things which please God, not please yourselves, the whirlpool will catch you and who can save you, who can secure you? Those of us who are old and grey-headed may

see things that will be utterly destructive. Poor England; she was exalted to heaven by her valuing the Holy Scripture; she will be debased to hell by her rejection of the Scripture. And, as in the days of Christ's sojourn on earth, His enemies were religious people, (religious people sought His life and by wicked hands took and crucified Him), so today, in this country religious people are the greatest enemies of Christ. They name Him, they talk about Him, they debase Him from His eternal deity to a mere man. They debase Him by speaking of His ignorance and prejudice as a Jew and they turn against Him. "Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this".

Now God has a people, a people He gathers to Himself; Gentiles as well as Jews, for Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. But we here, who are the sons of the stranger, Gentile, who, by grace, have joined ourselves to the Lord, have great reason to bless God for this sweet text. I take this text to be an epitome of the gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ. A sweet gathering of people to Himself and giving them a will to do of His good pleasure. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure". And they choose; you have chosen; I have chosen; to do the things that please God. Is not that wonderful, wonderful to you and wonderful to myself, that we should choose the things that please God. What pleases God? Christ and all the things that He has. And by mercy we have chosen Him and His things. "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her". The love of God for Gentiles was very early in the history of the world declared. It was declared to Abraham when the Lord made a covenant with him. He said "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." It was declared concerning the seed which is Christ, as the Apostle Paul teaches when he speaks of the seed. He says it is seed: not of seeds but of thy seed, which is Christ. And have not some of you, in your very souls, blessed God when, in distress and fear, and when love has touched you, and sweet repentance has moved you, and faith toward God has impelled you to go and make choice of Christ; to choose those things which please God. Our ways do not please Him; they

cannot. Our natural ways are ways of enmity. But the way of a chosen Jew, a chosen Gentile, under the Spirit's power is to choose Christ. The stranger, the Gentile, has a common ground with the Jew and the Jew a common ground with the Gentile and that common ground is Christ on the cross. The house of prayer is there; people pray by the cross; they pray at the cross; they love the cross; their prayers are offered up in the name of the Lord Jesus, and they are accepted therefore. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it".

"Join themselves to the Lord". O say some, we could not think of doing that. When you kneel before God and have a broken spirit and a contrite heart, when you are blessed with repentance for all your sins and the sin of your nature, when you name the Name of Jesus Christ and plead His blessed efficacious atonement, what is it? Joining yourselves to the Lord; separated from the world. What a favour is this. When it is at all realised it brings a sinner into that sweet state of repentance and humiliation of self, and humility of heart that can never be adequately expressed. And why should God look on you? That is the feeling of your heart. Why should He have thoughts of peace to you and not of evil? Why should He not say to His sword, - Awake against that sinner and utterly slay him? Because you have joined yourself to the Lord by precious faith, by humble petitions.

"To serve Him." How can you serve Him? When every thought is by grace brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and you, a Gentile sinner, offer up yourself as the Apostle speaks in, I think, the Galatians; when you offer yourself up to God in the Person of the Lord Jesus and by His precious blood, you serve God and He accepts the humble service; makes His pleasure known. It is this blessed faith of God's operation that brings the soul to the footstool of mercy where the whole heart is offered up; where, as you have sung many a time here - Here's my heart, Lord take and seal it"; I have nothing better to offer. He would not have anything better of your own. You have nothing better than a wicked heart, but He accepts it in His Son, and this is the greatest service you can ever do. When all your thoughts,

self righteous thoughts, obeying thoughts, meriting thoughts, thoughts that would bring you to make God a debtor, when all these things are brought into captivity to the Lord Jesus and to the obedience of faith, then there is an acceptance; "Accepted in the beloved". And the Lord says this to strangers who come, sons of the stranger, Gentiles. O bless God for free grace; bless Him for His free love; bless the Lord Jesus for His infinite atonement, His divine robe for justification, His grace for subduing sin and getting everlasting victories. O bless God for this goodness that He has manifested to us in the Scriptures and to some of us in our own souls. "To serve Him, to love the Name of the Lord, to be His servant." Love the Name of the Lord! Some of you may say we very frequently have felt our enmity against Him when He has not pleased us in providence. When some Scriptures have fought against us in our consciences we have not been pleased with Him; we have not loved Him. But when surprising mercy has touched your hearts, when He has whispered - "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him", that is more than you can resist, I say, more than you can resist. You begin to flow down - Lord I am sorry that I have been such a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke and have kicked. I am sorry that I have resisted the Scriptures which have come to condemn me. I am sorry that I have walked so foolishly, so unprofitably. And He says - "Is he a pleasant child?" O, faith says in the man's heart - "Lord Jesus, Thou art my choice", and that pleases God. "Is he a pleasant child?" He ceases to speak against you then; He embraces you, and He says - "My peace I give unto thee"; the peace procured by the cross; the peace made by Jesus Christ; the peace that was made by His death, breaking down all the walls of partition and separation. "To love the Name of the Lord". And God has accepted the song that some of us have sung sometimes

Jesus I love Thy charming Name
'Tis music to my ears

"To love the Name of the Lord, to be His servants". And you have

said - O I am so tired of serving myself; I am weary of my self-will and self-strength, and self-direction and self-wisdom. I have served myself; I have served my lusts; I have prayed wrongly; I have prayed for things to consume them upon my own lusts. Lord I am weary of it. Have not you said it in spirit and substance - I am weary of it. O may I be Thy servant; may I have grace to lie at the footstool of mercy, to spread out my wants, to bring my person, to bring my offerings, to bring my confessions, to bring my thoughts, to bring my petitions. O servants of the Most High God, what a privilege God has given to you to be His servant, to love His Name.

"Every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it". Polluting the Sabbath. We pollute it as a nation and only lately legalised what has been practised. God instituted the Sabbath. When He had finished creation, He saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good. And He rested on the seventh day and He sanctified it. 'Tis good for men, 'tis good for beast, 'tis good for morals that the Lord's Day should be observed. It is not observed; it is broken. A mere fraction of the nation observe the Lord's Day. Woe be to us for it; woe be to us as a nation. You young people may get temptations to break the Sabbath; God keep you from following the temptation. Remember the Lord's Day that you keep it holy. But the Sabbath was typical and I understand the text to have this typical Sabbath in view. It was typical of gospel rest, so the Jewish Sabbath was changed to the Lord's Day when the Lord arose from the dead and now the proper term is the Lord's Day. The old Sabbath was abolished when Christ abolished death and took away all the types by fulfilling them and removed the shadows by the coming of the body. And what is it then to keep the Sabbath from polluting it but to rest in the Person and the work of Christ, from all legal doings. Of course it involves the keeping of the Lord's Day from the ordinary duties of the six working days, but this is the spirit of it. "We which have believed do enter into rest", and there remains a Sabbatism to all who believe, a blessed Sabbatism, a rest from pain and toil of slavish kind. And it means in the spirit of it that the soul rests absolutely in the Lord Jesus; rests from all endeavours to please God after the flesh; rests

from all works of slavish kind; rests by faith in the atoning blood of Jesus. When you keep the Sabbath from polluting it, then your conscience has a divine peace in it. "My peace I give unto you". This holy peace. Notice this blessed word - "Keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it." Do you understand it experimentally? It is quite easy to demonstrate it from the Scripture but it is not easy to express it as a matter of experience. As a matter of experience it is just that, that the conscience has perfect rest in the atonement of the Lord Jesus and does not attempt to wash away any sin; does not endeavour to remove any corruption; does not endeavour to subdue any sin by human effort or strength; but just rests for reconciliation to God, for peace with God, for peace in your conscience, in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus. And until a child of God, born again and troubled by sin and afflicted by the law, comes into this rest, he does not understand what it is to keep the sabbath from polluting it; but he does understand it when he comes to that. Christ is in him; he is in Christ; they are united and what is astonishing is this, that they are friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends". They are friends and as friends communicate with each other and let out secrets that are not common to all people. So when these two are together they walk as friends, and Christ communicates some secrets and the sinner communicates his heart, his secret things that he could not tell to a fellow creature, not to the wife of his bosom. O happy people who are brought into this experience. What does Paul say about it? "Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any of you should seem to come short of it". And this sets before us a wonderful experience. It does not say "rest" because you know your disease. It is good to know it. It does not say "rest" because you understand that disease is naturally incurable. It is good to know that, but you cannot rest in it. It does not say that you can rest in the knowledge that there is no safety out of Christ; it is good to know there is none. But O if you see a flaming sword and if you believe that that sword should pierce you to death, how can you rest? To see danger is not to be saved from it, but to be saved from it is to receive Jesus Christ into your soul by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and for faith to go out to Him and lay hold of Him and rest in Him. My brethren, God

give you and give me more diligently to follow after what the Apostle says, which I have just quoted - "Let us labour to enter into that rest". We which have believed do enter into rest. We have entered into it.

"That keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it and taketh hold of My covenant". The allusion is to the national covenant that God made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. The allusion is that a proselyte, a Gentile, coming into the Jewish Church by the ritual that God prescribed, took hold of that covenant and participated in the benefits of it. The experience in the gospel is for a sinner who can say - "Lord, in the great sheet let down from heaven to Peter, knit at the four corners, were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the heaven, and I am one of those unclean creatures. But they were in the covenant, in the great sheet, and now my soul's hope is there, and I plead and pray I may be found in it and in nothing else" - And by faith the soul takes hold of that covenant; it is the sinner's hope that God has given him to Christ, and that the covenant of grace was made with Christ for him. Faith takes hold of it, pleads it, looks to it. Does this meet the experience of some of you? Does it meet, I say, with some of your cases, that there is a covenant of grace and your soul is after a felt interest in it. You take hold of it by faith; you take hold of it in prayer and supplication; you take hold of it and present it to God as the only ground and way of escape from the wrath to come. O, sons of the stranger, come to this. God said by this prophet - "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters" Come to this great mercy, this fountain of goodness, this blessed covenant of grace, covenant of peace, and lay hold of it. As one, a poor penniless creature, goes to buy wine and milk of God, so this stranger comes to take hold, by faith and prayer, of this divine covenant. Will God reject him? No! What does He say - "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out". Coming sinners have wonderful encouragement in the Scriptures if they could but see it; wonderful encouragement given in the Scriptures, the infallible Word of God, to sinners. - Ho everyone that thirsteth for waters that are not to be found in any pit or

spring in the whole universe; waters that issue from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb and that are in this covenant.

"That taketh hold of My covenant". The national covenant of the Jews held good things for them. The land of promise, fruitful seasons, rain and sun. Not like the land of Egypt that was watered by the foot; the foot making little openings or channels to the fields that were cultivated, so that when the Nile overflowed its banks, then all these channels were filled with its fructifying waters and the fields made fruitful. No! said God, you are not going to a land that shall be fruitful by your industry alone. It is a land of hills and valleys, a land that drinketh in the rain of heaven; a land on which the eyes of the Lord are from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; a land which the Lord thy God careth for. This was in the national covenant. And when the gracious covenant of God is taken hold of by faith and prayer by a child of God, he takes hold of that, that contains every blessing of the gospel. Forgiveness, justification, sanctification, redemption, perseverance, helps, deliverances, promises, interpositions, all, all contained in the blessed covenant of grace with this addition. Whereas the national covenant had conditions which, being broken, the people forfeited their interest and the Lord scattered them (and they are scattered today), the Covenant of Grace has this - "I will make with you an everlasting covenant" not like the covenant I made with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake, though I was a husband to them, but this is the covenant I will make in the last days - what is it? - "I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them and they shall be to Me a people and I will be to them a God, and they shall no more teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', for all shall know Me from the least to the greatest, for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more." O dear friends in the Lord Jesus, when by faith and prayer you have laid hold of that covenant, see what God has made over to you. He has made it over to every poor Gentile sinner, this divine endless covenant that cannot be broken. Take hold of it, O poor

believer; take hold of it; it wont fail you; it cannot fail you.

"Taketh hold of my covenant". There is one certain thing the Lord does with all His people. He breaks their covenant with death and their league with hell. He does not leave them there. "I will not leave you orphans" said Jesus. "I will not leave you comfortless". When I have broken your covenant I will make a new covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Well, this is, as I understand it, a very sweet gospel text. Sons of the stranger in this congregation, yea all of us are sons of the stranger, but I speak to those who have joined themselves to the Lord. Said Peter, "We have left all and followed Thee". What have we left? The world? Some of us left it in a particular way because we were born and bred in it, but we have all had to leave it. But that is not the greatest thing we have left. We have left self. If any man will come after Me and be My disciple, let him deny himself; let him deny himself. When one has done that he has joined himself to the Lord by prayer saying, in the language of good Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave Thee, nor to return from following after Thee". Like poor Mary - "Lord, I would choose the better part, let me not be deprived of it".

May the Holy Ghost help us; may He kindly look upon us and give us a spiritual understanding and reception of this word. "The sons of the stranger who have joined themselves to the Lord". And what is thus joined, no man shall put asunder. May the Lord command His blessing to rest upon this sweet Scripture and make it spirit and life to us.

AMEN.