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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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Isaiah 57 v 15

For thus saith the High and Lofty One that
inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell
in the High and Holy place with him also that is of a
contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit
of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones

Thus Jehovah speaks; happy is that sinner whose ears are
opened by the Spirit so that he pays attention to the Being of
God. No doctrine has such a humbling effect on the heart like
this; this Holy God. The lightness of religion follows the
little knowledge, the slight apprehensions of God, and where He
reveals, in an effectual measure, His Eternal Majesty, there must
be, as a necessary and blessed consequence, reverence and awe and
worship and conviction of utter unworthiness to be in the sight
of so glorious a Being. Everyone who gets a sight of God, such
as Abraham had, will find in himself what Abraham found in
himself, namely, that he is dust and ashes; what Ezekiel found,
that he was corrupt; what Daniel found, his comeliness was
turned into corruption within him. The same effect always
follows, according to the measure of it, a manifestation of God
to a sinner. Men thus blessed do not become smaller sinners, nor
do their vain thoughts become less guilty thoughts. They grow in
sinfulness, not in sinful practices, but in real humbling
knowledge of what they are in the fall of Adam, and their own
transgressions.

"Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabitest Eternity"
Listen, hearken dear hearers, for God speaks. Eternity, as it
respects Jehovah, has no beginning, shall have no ending. He
inhabits it as His home, without beginning. Here we are lost.
You cannot, with all your reckoning, enter into this deep mystery
- the Being of God. Scripture reveals Him; may we be content
with that as it may be opened to us by the Holy Spirit. The

Lofty One is lofty above all human reckoning or peering or understanding or comprehension. But this Lofty One may be apprehended, and is apprehended, by all to whom the open eye is given by the Holy Ghost, and the understanding heart. Now this great truth is here declared. Though the Lord be high above our comprehension, He condescends to give real and true apprehensions of His majesty. And this Lofty One is known in the scripture and believed in the church to be three; one God in Three Persons; one divine nature in three persons. And this is not above any of the poor tried children of God, because it is plainly declared; it is not a theory that men have concluded and described in some way; it is the immediate revelation of God by the Holy Spirit in the inspired Bible. Listen - "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost" and these three are one. One nature, three persons in that nature. Do not try to reason it into your minds, you never will. Do not try to comprehend the mystery, it is not revealed for human reason and mental comprehension; it is revealed for faith. And these three persons in the High and Lofty One are revealed as possessing essential names. I would wish to press that for a moment. They are revealed as possessing essential names. A thing that is essential, if destroyed, destroys that in which it was an essential. If you destroy the names of the Trinity, as given in the Scripture, then there is left no God. Destroy the name of the Father, you destroy what the scripture ascribed to Him; destroy the Name of the Son or Word, for those two Names are given as men speak, indifferently. One is equal to the other. You can transfer the name Word to the Son and that is quite correct; you transfer the name of Son to the Word, and that is correct, and it is essential. "Behold this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" "Unto us" the church "is a child born, a Son given". He that spared not His own Son" "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". These Scriptures give the Son of God His essential Name. He is not a Son by office, but by nature. And the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, has His Name. These Three - Father, Word and Holy Ghost, are one. One God, one Father, one Son, one Spirit. Now this glorious Being is revealed in the Scripture as having a voluntary relationship to men. In

that wonderful chapter in Luke tracing the genealogy of the Lord Jesus to Adam as the promised seed, it is said "which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God" (Luke 3 part of verse 38) But that blessed relationship was broken when the law was broken; man became an alien. Do you know what the word "alien" means? We are English people; if men of other nations come and take up their abode in England, they live in peace, but they are aliens, they do not belong to the nation; they have not national life and blood in them. We are become, by the fall, aliens; no good, proper relationship is in us to Jehovah. Now God, the Trinity, has been pleased to reveal Himself in another relationship to the church. He gives her the names of sons and daughters; of children of God, by faith; of the bride of the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus; the church of the living God; the city that is four square. And other names, sweet, blessed appellations, we have given in the scripture, showing the blessed, gracious, benign relationship of God to some men. Now these relationships bring forth God's nature flowing in a particular channel. His nature is described as "Love". God is love, and He declared that name to the church in Ezekiel, when He said of that cast out infant, helpless, hopeless, with none to do any kind office "Thy time was a time of love". The God of love passed by that infant and said - "live". This relationship is set forth as covering the naked with a blessed robe of righteousness; as washing all the sins of the soul away by the precious shed blood of Christ; as quickening the dead. "You hath He quickened", and as under the teaching and influence of the Spirit.

"Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity" And what is said further? - "Though the Lord be high yet hath He respect unto the lowly". That is in the Psalms. The same truth is in the text. "I dwell in the high and holy place". Do not some of you feel the infinite distance there is between you and that God before whom you kneel in prayer? Do you not feel that He is an infinite, glorious Being in whom, though you understand Him not, you believe? And, believing, you kneel down and pray to Him, or on your beds, your hearts kneel and you pray. "I dwell in the high and holy place". May we never be left to think that

He is such a one as ourselves. The man who deliberately, wilfully, thinks God to be such a one as himself, is dead in trespasses and sins, and if he never has better thoughts of God than those thoughts, where God is in the high and lofty place he will never be.

Now what does He say? Listen, sinner. The sinner who is frequently cutting himself off, very frequently cutting himself off, listen if you can, in the midst of distracting thoughts, and self-condemnation - "With him also" I will dwell with him, a man who says "I am a worm"; who feels he is dead; who feels he is condemned; who condemns himself; who searches his heart for good and finds none; who searches his heart for grace and thinks and fears he has none; who trembles at the Word of God, at the Majesty of God, and says religion is too high for me. Says God - I dwell with him. O the man is ready to contradict God, not wilfully, but out of his feeling of being a wicked person, a guilty person. How does God dwell with men? By His Spirit; by His own life imparted; by His conquering grace; by His life. "I give unto My sheep eternal life". Why do some of you want God whom once you wanted not? Why are you dissatisfied without Him, whatever you possess here? Why are you unhappy when you feel sin working and no grace to overcome? Why do you feel miserable when you cannot pray? "I give unto My sheep eternal life". Now this life, which you fear you have not, is of a different nature from the natural life we live, all of us, and because it is of a different nature it wants to be fed. It has different desires, longings, pantings, exercises. The food it longs for is Christ; the language of a living man is this "Give me Christ or else I die". Now can some of you cut yourselves off in the face of that? Can you honestly say, could you kneel down with that in your mind - "Give me Christ or else I die", and say to the Lord you are a dead sinner? A longing for Christ comes from a contrite and humble spirit where God dwells. Yes, if you had what the rich fool had, with grace in you, you would not live as he lived, nor say what he said. He lived as a man of wealth and he said - "Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, take thy pleasure", that is, live according to thy

possessions. Ah, no, said the God in whom he lived, and knew it not, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee". Now a living man says "Lord, I do not want to be put off with anything here. I have some things I value, but I do not want to be put off with anything I have here. O give me Christ or else I die." God dwells with him in His own life; He dwells with him by the indwelling of the Spirit.

The Spirit is given to the saints of God, to show them that they are sinners; to teach them the truth, and to lead them to the Son of God, and His motions sometimes are very distinct. I do not mean that you feel them, realise them to be His motions, but they are there. One is this - you must pray. You must pray. You say, I am afraid I do not pray. That may be; I would not contradict that for a moment, but I say that there are habits of life. We speak of the habit of hunger; it is a habit of our bodies to be hungry, not every moment, but there is a habit of hunger, something in us that at proper times really longs for food. Now there is a habit of prayer in a child of God. a real, blessed, spiritual faculty in him, a habit - he must pray. "I called upon the Lord in distress" Yes, "I cried unto God out of the low dungeon". And the child of God understands it; it is something in his soul that is natural to him, as natural to his spiritual being as it is natural to his nature to be hungry. And you will find that, as you live, even without assurance of answers, without knowing to your comfort that you belong to God, there is this habit, an uprising in the soul, a desire for God, a worshipping of Him, a looking to the Lord Jesus, a feeling after the cross, the virtue and the power of the cross, and by that we gain this - an evidence that God is dwelling in the soul, and do not neglect to notice it. You must pray; it grows by the Holy Spirit and you may sometimes gather a little strength in this, that there is a nature in you that opposes it, a nature so proud, so ignorant of God, so ignorant of sin, so ignorant of the holiness and majesty of God, that you just have the spirit in you that was in Pharoah - "Who is the Lord that I should pray unto Him". Now that felt in you and yet also the feeling that you must pray, the latter will be very evidenced as being a gift of God, derived from the life of God, the indwelling of God.

Another evidence is that wonderful grace - faith. This faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And if a modernist, an infidel, were to come to you and say there is no God, and argue and bring arguments which you could not answer, yet God the Spirit would help you to say - I believe there is a God and I want that God. I would think myself rich indeed if I knew Him to be my God, my Saviour. Now the Lord says, I dwell with this man. He is a believer; he believes in Me. By Moses, God said to His ancient people "How long will it be e're ye believe Me". That was their practice, unbelief, but of the same people, it is written that whenever trouble came they cried unto God. And it is written that He heard them. Rest in Israel brought forth the idolatry of their nature; trouble in Israel brought forth the good that God had given to them, put in them, that is in the godly of them. Faith will always be that way; rising to God, panting for God; hungering for Christ; crying for the Spirit. God dwelt in that person. Some of you may be ready to contradict me with respect to yourselves, but I will maintain my ground, and would that the Lord would enable me to show you in spite of your unbelief, that you are really believers, really believers. O believers in God, believers in God can never live happily without Him. I know I am speaking the truth; I know it for myself, and I am sure some of you must agree with me. Now you look at yourselves, and what a sight it is, what a sight it is. Nobody knows what a void and formless and huge being he is as a sinner until he gets a sight of that in the light of God, in the teaching of the Spirit. You look at yourself and you say I do not know that my beginning was right or that I have had a beginning. I do not know that I am rightly convinced of sin, though I do feel my sin; I feel I am a sinner. I do not know that I believe, though I do not doubt the Bible. I do not know that I have ever repented, though I can say truly sometimes I am sorry I am a sinner. Well, bring all your objections arising out of your knowledge of yourselves, and then, without contradicting anything you say at the moment, I will bring this before you. Do you want God? Can you be happy without Him? Can you live without trying to pray? Can you read the Scriptures sometimes without feeling attracted to the

teaching of them, to the teaching of them respecting the doctrine of salvation? Now be as honest in acknowledging the truth of this in your answer as you are in raising your objections. Lie not against your right.

"With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit"
Humble; true humility does not say - look at me, see what I am. True humility hides itself and hides the sinner as it were. The man who is truly humble says - Lord I am a polluted creature; I am less than the least I am not worth the name of a Christian. Lord, Thou knowest I am full of sin; I have nothing but sin. Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips; I am a poor wretched creature; I am unthankful; I am unholy; I am forgetful of God; I am forgetful of His mercies. Do you know that man? Say, do you know that man? If some of you speak the truth, notwithstanding your fears, you will say - well, we do know him. What does God dwell with these people for? He tells us "To revive the spirit of the humble"; a poor, worn out sinner, very depressed because he reads the Bible often and gets nothing; very depressed because he hears the truth and receives nothing by it; very depressed because, though he tries to pray, he gets no answers. What does God say - I live in him and I will operate in him that I may revive him. He gives him a cordial sometimes; He speaks to him and says "Come unto Me". Now you say at once - I have never had that. You may have had it in the spirit of it without the letter. The spirit of it is this, the attraction that God makes you feel in the Person of Christ, in the death of Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the mediation of Christ, the intercession of Christ; His goodness, His love, His pity, His compassion, His power. When you feel attracted by the Lord thus you may find, you will find, that there is such a reviving in your spirit. You may even say what sometimes perhaps you have ventured to sing - "If free grace why not for me". If poverty, weakness, fear, felt sorrow for sin, can afford a plea, Lord I have a plea. Now there is a reviving by the invitation in the spirit of it. There is a reviving sometimes in what may be only a passing glimpse of Christ, of His Person. A reviving when the

cup of salvation is put into your hand and you take a sip of the

water of salvation; when you get access in prayer; when you feel the Lord does not turn away His ear from you nor His mercy; when you feel enabled to urge and plead upon the Lord's notice and before Him the blessed sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The reviving comes by some motion of the Spirit within you, when condescendingly He draws you, opens a little of the mystery of Christ's Person to you. Now I would say, the Lord give you grace to listen to the reviving invitations, to the touches of mercy, to the attractions of the Lord Jesus. They are not given for nothing; they are given for reviving. The Holy Ghost is the teacher and God sends Him, Christ sends Him. As the unction of the Holy One, He operates, He touches the heart, He touches faith, He touches a spring of life in the soul, and there is a moving after Him and a feeling you cannot rest until you receive Him and embrace Him.

"And to revive the heart of the contrite ones." A contrite person is a person who feels sorry that he is a sinner, that he has committed sin. The Psalmist was contrite when he said - "I will be sorry for my sin". A contrite person does not hide or try to hide his sin; he confesses it. He is sorry and now and again perhaps he is really able to say in his heart - Lord I am sorry I am a sinner. There is more in the expression than he may realise at the moment, but God sees it, and He says - Though I be high, though I be eternal, full of majesty, incomprehensibly glorious in My holiness and in My justice, in all the perfection of My nature, yet I will stoop down to look at a poor contrite sinner; I will look on him, and I will take notice of him. Heaven and earth are not so attractive, if I may use that word, to the Lord as a trembling sinner is. I will dwell with him that trembleth at My word. Ah, some of you who cannot call the Lord your own as yet, may be able to say - I tremble at His word. I even tremble at the gospel, lest I should be found destitute of it; but I tremble at His threatenings for I deserve them. Now may the Lord encourage us; we need encouragement. We each need it for our own souls. There is plenty to discourage us in

ourselves. I would not give much for that religion that anyone may have who can say he has no discouragements from his own heart, but there is more to encourage. Ah, you may sometimes yet hear what may almost be an audible voice to you - "Dost thou believe on the Son of God" There are degrees of faith. One of the earliest movements, one of the first degrees of faith you will find to be this - "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." That faith is more pleasing to God than rivers of oil, than all forests and all beasts for sacrifices. God is pleased with a believing, trembling, sinner. Though He be high, yet He taketh pleasure in them that fear Him. He taketh pleasure in them.

Now may it please the Holy Spirit to take this beautiful Scripture which I have read and tried to speak about, as an encouraging word, as an instructing word. And look at what follows - "I will not contend for ever". I wont be always and only convincing you of your sins. I will be doing that, for you would soon forget them if I let you, but I will not contend for ever, neither will I always be wrath, for if I were so the spirit should fail before Me and the souls which I have made alive and filled with desire for Myself. The gospel is for sinners.

AMEN.