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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTIST

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 21 January 1920

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.

We have in the text two parties infinitely removed each from the other in their natures and in their dwellings. One, infinite, supreme, incomprehensible, inhabiting eternity; eternity itself with no time, no spot, no point where He began to be; above all, lofty. Lofty among men may mean pride; lofty in God expresses His exalted position. Above all conception as to His nature, as to eternity, as to what He can do. Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see. This is Almighty God. He describes Himself in these sublime words. He describes His condescension; He describes the object of His condescension. "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." May the Lord help us to stand, as it were, before this Holy One, and tremble at His holiness and yet not wish it less. These are to me great words, have been great today. To have any true conception of God we must have divine life, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Every conception that we have, naturally speaking, of God, must necessarily be short and necessarily wrong. If He Himself be not our teacher to give us true thoughts and conceptions, we must be wrong in what we think of Him and that charge, so solemn, must belong to us "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself". Now I should be glad and thankful if it would please God to cause that we, worshipping here, may have this mark stamped upon us, the mark of holy reverence of that Majesty whose glory we cannot bear but in a very small measure. "Thus saith the High and Lofty One". One God in Three Persons, each Person possessing the fulness of the divine nature. Each Person, as far as

we may speak according to the Scripture, as I humbly believe, each Person delighting ineffably, infinitely in the other. The Father loving the Son, the Son loving the Father, the Spirit with them both, and all rejoicing together, independent of creation, independent of creatures. Glorious and holy, infinite and blessed in Himself, is God. And though He purposed eternally to make discoveries of Himself in the works of creation and to angels and men, His creatures, it was not because He needed anything of the kind to make Him blessed, but because, being good, He must communicate of His goodness to creatures. Goodness is communicative, and God would communicate it and, my brethren, I pray that in the few days that remain to us on earth, we may have some true and powerful and penetrating discoveries made to us of this mighty One that inhabiteth eternity.

Consider for a moment the condescension in coming forth from these infinite depths of inexhaustible light to show Himself to the wondering eyes of creatures, even of holy, elect angels. What a stoop it was in Him to do this. But He stoops still more than this when He condescends to come to sinners and redeem them and open their eyes to look on Himself in the way in which He can be seen and the sight of Him can be borne, even in Jesus Christ. He dwells in the high and holy place, above creatures, looking on them, ordering their steps, ordering them in all things. Nothing falls out by chance; no evil comes by chance. The power of chance we may well defy. Yea, we may well put aside the name, and the use of it discontinue, because there is One in heaven of whom are the ways of men. "O Lord" said one good man, a prophet, "I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps". And if the Holy Ghost would give to us a solid belief in this it would affect us well. And this Holy One, dwelling in the high and holy place, to which no man can climb or ascend, He says that He will also dwell with a sinner. "With him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." How shall I speak of a humble person? What makes a humble person? Three things, as I judge, go to make a humble person. First, the presence, in some way, the knowledge of God in some way, by that person possessed, felt. If the Holy One comes near to you you will understand exactly what Abraham felt when the Lord came to him and he fell on his face. No strength to stand before infinite majesty. He

fell on his face. Flippant words can well consist when God is not with a person. Flippant feelings about religion may well be when God is not with a person. But when God is with a person, it is quite different. Abraham fell on his face. When the Lord drew near to Moses and Moses was for the moment ignorant of that presence and said, in that ignorance, I will turn aside and see what this great sight meaneth, the Lord spoke to Him. "Moses, Moses, draw not nigh hither; take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God. And when the Lord drew near to Joshua as the captain of the Lord of Hosts, and Joshua, in his ignorance said - "Who art thou? Art thou for us or against us?", the Lord said that He was the captain of the Lord of Hosts, and Joshua was to take off his shoes from off his feet. What a solemn moment it was for him. And when the Lord drew near to Gideon and spoke to him, and Gideon realised whom he had looked upon, he was afraid, for he said "I have seen the Lord". What a solemn sight; he had seen the Lord. When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, he was filled with woe because He dwelt among sinful people and himself was a sinful man. And when Daniel saw the Lord, he fell down on the ground and said he had no strength left in him and his comeliness was turned into corruption. The same experience was had by Ezekiel, by Peter who, seeing the glory of God said, "Depart from Me O Lord for I am a sinful man". And by Paul, who was blinded for the time by the glory that shone upon him. "Who art Thou Lord?" he said. And John, when He saw the Lord fell at His feet as dead. What do these scriptures teach us? They teach us that our nature cannot bear the glory of God and that a gracious heart trembles and worships when God comes. They teach us the truth that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, that all the outsides, all the trappings of religion, all the attractions and all the light talk about religion wither, completely wither and die away, and that a gracious soul feels himself to be but dust and ashes, and dare hardly take on himself to speak to so great a God. What is it then to be humble? It is to be possessed of some measure of knowledge of the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. Oh it does show us our vanity, our emptiness, our foolishness, when God comes near. May He draw near to us. It is solemn to be even where the place of His feet is, for that is glorious. That is one thing then that you will find if you are blessed with it will most powerfully conduce to

humility in you, conduce to produce the most self-abasing thoughts of yourself in you; that will bring you to Paul's word "Who am less than the least of all saints". Yea, to his word in the Corinthians, "things that are not". Yea, you will understand the feelings of Daniel who said his comeliness was turned in him to corruption. What can a poor creature feel but dust and ashes when the presence of God in some measure is felt.

The second thing is this, solemn and sound convictions of our corruption, our sinfulness, our depravity. When we look at ourselves in our own light, we do not see very much amiss. When we look at ourselves in God's light, we see there is nothing right, all wrong, all awry; sin mixed with all we do and think and say. The knowledge we have is very small, we then feel, of what is good. The experience of God we may think we have had, withers almost. Nothing but that which is absolutely right in us by the Spirit will stand when conviction comes. You cannot go about strutting as if you were somebody if God shows you what you are. O no, this I know; this path, I know it. It is very solemn to be truly convinced of what we are; to have the light of God let into our nature so to speak and into our best things, our very best. We can enter then into Christ's word to His disciples, "When ye have done all these things say, we are unprofitable servants". And when I, who have not done them, come to look at matters, what have I to say, and what have you to say? And this prevents the growth of pride, this prevents it flourishing and this prevents us taking that position in our spirits which naturally we should like to take, when we are convinced of sin. It is the Spirit's work to bring this conviction and lodge it in the heart. I have been thinking of this today. It is a humbling consideration when one looks at one's self. I do confess to you that as I look back as I do much in these my latter days, upon the profession I have made and the ministry I have exercised for now many years, I am made ashamed more than I am able to express, and nothing but the blood of Christ can keep hope alive in a heart that gets distressed with a sight and sense of sinfulness.

The third thing that makes humility in a man and makes it thrive, is the forgiveness of sins. This is most powerful, most sweet, most effectual. It permeates, penetrates; it brings

contrition, it fills the soul with self-loathing, with love of God in Christ. There is no place too little for the person in whom lives a sense of pardon for any time. "Having forgiven you all trespasses". Here is the plaster for the sore boil. Here is the Good Physician's remedy effectually applied. Here is the smile of God working in the soul and producing the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. Here is the sweet peace of God which passeth all understanding, making the person in whom it is to say "Why this mercy to me?" O why this forgiveness to me?

Now brethren, these three things known in some degree will make us humble people, and I have spoken of this because of the great word of God in the text concerning a humble man - "With him also will I dwell that is of a contrite and humble spirit".

What is it to be contrite? The word contrite means "to bruise". It means "to bruise". Well, if you are convinced of sin, you are a bruised person, and if you are forgiven, the blood that forgave you will bruise you so sweetly, so effectually, as that contrition and love will make up a compound that will be pleasing to God; be like the spikenard that sends forth a sweet smell; like the box of precious ointment that the woman broke and anointed Christ with contrition and love. O how sweet it is to feel them. How well they go together. Contrition is the opposite of hardness. Our hardness sometimes makes it necessary for the Lord to break us. O the hardness of our hearts. He sends a rod and uses it. He sends trouble to break. Then He sends grace to soften and these two make a contrite person, a very contrite person. You do not know how to get low enough when you are contrite, how to bless God enough, how to trust Him enough, how to commit yourself to Him enough, and ask His guidance through difficulties, His support under burdens, and His blessing with you at all times.

Here then are two parties; here are two characters, both of them written by the pen of truth; the Holy Ghost has written them. God, high and lofty, inhabiting eternity. God looking on us when we are ignorant of Him, reckoning us, weighing us, trying us often when we are ignorant. God, who knows no contingency, with whom are no second thoughts. God, ruling and over-ruling, reigning, managing,

ordering, fitting people into things, and sending things to people. God, who will not be put off. He is determined to teach His children, determined that they shall learn certain lessons, yet full of love to them, full of goodness, of pity, full of mercy and all compassion and many a time forgiving their iniquity and not stirring up all His wrath. This God, this Holy One, if I do not, and I cannot indeed, rightly express the sublimity of this wonder in our text, you will bear with me. I am not sufficient for it - it is too high - and yet a worm may be permitted and even led by the Holy Ghost to speak of this great One, great in His nature, but only known as He is a self-revealing God. Great in His love, which is expressed in the highest possible manner, in the gift of His dearly beloved Son. Great in forgiveness as He is known to be when He forgives many sins of some sinners. Great in His forbearance as it is known when He bears with wayward children and at last fetches them back by a kind word, and great in His compassion so that when He sees them weeping and beholds contrition in their hearts, He says, "I have seen his ways and will; heal him. I will lead him also and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. Great in His goodness in supplying their necessities in providence and giving them a supply of the Spirit of Christ. This is this great One and He has provided heaven for wretches who deserve hell. He sends His Spirit to them as being His children in the covenant and as being bought by the blood of Christ to quicken them into eternal life. He then produces humility in their hearts. He sheds the light of His nature into their souls. He lets His light into their sinful nature until they can scarcely bear the sight, but it is wholesome for them, it is good for them. And then, when He has produced this humility He says, now I will come and dwell with that man. What an amazement. Did you ever ask Him to come? What a favour to have a power in your soul to ask Him to come. What is His presence? What is it to feel His presence? What is it to know His presence? What is His presence? It is in Christ Jesus; He is present in Christ. His Name is in Christ; His love is in Christ; His pardons are by Christ, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. What is His presence but His pardon. Expressed in pardon His presence is. What is it but His love made known. "That the love of Christ may be in you". It is Himself coming. "If any man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love Him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." His presence is the Holy Ghost in a sinner. "He

shall be with you and dwell in you" is Christ's promise. So God's presence is the presence of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. "Know ye not that except ye be reprobates the Holy Ghost is in you". Ye are the temple of God; the Trinity is with people. The Holy Ghost is with sinners to convince them, to comfort them. Christ is with them to bring the sweetness of pardon to them, and the Father is with them to receive them as His sons and daughters and to walk among them. The presence of God is known in His smile, known in His operations, known in the infinite love that is by the Spirit shed abroad in the heart. "I will dwell with him". It is light whereby a man knows the way wherein he should walk. It is life whereby he feels what he would be and feels he is not that and yet pants after it. It is love that rises in desire to God. It rises as high as God because it comes from Him. It is goodness; "The desire of the righteous is only good", and when God is with people they have that desire. It is sweetness; it is salt, the salt of the covenant to preserve from the putrefaction of a sinful nature. It is like the word of God, yea, He is in the Word whereby the sinner is guarded and taught and has a sword and an understanding. "Give me understanding and I shall live". The presence of God is a surrounding presence. Who is he that shall harm you, in a certain case, and what is that? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It is the love of God, this blessed presence. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." May we know what this presence is.

And what is it for? What will God do by this? "To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones". Then this would point out, first of all, that the humble is in a low place, very low in his feelings as if his life were low, feeble, nearly gone, to his own sense. As when the people were in their 70 years

captivity, long absence from the house of God, and sights of false gods, and hearing sounds against God would affect their life, affect their feelings respecting God and His dwelling place, so, when a humble person is distant from the Lord, cannot get near, gets no word, no promise, no communication, no distinct mercy, no coming in visits of Christ, his life ebbs, decreases. Spiritual energy dies away and the person gets very low. Doubts may arise. Shall I see Him again here? Shall I ever hear His voice, feel His mercy, taste that He is gracious, again? Will He come and forgive my sins and wash away all this fresh accumulated guilt? Will He come and bless me? The man is low; he has low views of himself. He says, I deserve to be forsaken. If a rod in providence is on him - I need it, I deserve it, my sins call for it. If physical decay is coming to him he says what does it mean? Am I going soon to leave this world? Am I ready for it? Will the Lord look on me, take me to Himself when I die? He is low; he wonders what will become of him, what the Lord will do with him. His spirit is meekened and broken in great measure, but he is in a low place. He needs a great deal; he needs a visit from the Physician; he needs the Physician's remedy. And now says the Lord, I will go to that man and I will revive him. What would revive you, revive me? The gospel. What is that? The Bread of Life, the Water of Life. The gospel is Christ revealed; good news from heaven. The news of justification, never to be revoked; of forgiveness, never to be taken back; of love, never to die; of a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The gospel of the grace of God, the gospel that says

Sinners are high in His esteem  
And sinners highly value Him

It is called the glorious gospel of the blessed God. O what a gospel, and when the Lord says He will come to revive the spirit of the humble it means, as I judge, that He will communicate, speak, touch, smile. And when He does so there is a change at once, a sweet change. Yea, you may get it and hardly know how it came. From being low, weak, despondent, depressed, you may sweetly find a change softly stealing over your spirit and you hardly know how; could not say it came by this Scripture or by that, or by any means at all, but you found some change in your heart. You did not go up for it except crying to God, but you found it within you, a sweet softness, a tenderness, a warmth

of love, a brightness of hope, a looking out for more mercy, a feeling that it would come, an expectant spirit in your revived condition. What a great change God works. "I make all things new" is His blessed word. "I make all things new". New feelings, new views of God, new views of your circumstances, new views of the thing that has troubled you. You get a change altogether and you are revived and you can say "I shall see Him, I shall see Him again and one day I shall be with Him". O it is a sweet thing to be revived.

"And to revive the heart of the contrite ones". Said David "O God my soul is cast down within me" and you may say the same. O God, I am cast down. My sins cast me down, the devil's temptations cast me down, fears cast me down, fears in the way, fears as to this providence and the issue of it to me. Fears as to what God will do with me and whether He will give me wisdom to walk in the midst of providences that are painful. Fears come and the Lord says "I will revive the heart of the contrite ones." Sometimes He does it by enabling faith in their hearts to remember the holy promise that God spake and then faith says to Him, "Remember Thy holy promise". You cannot describe it, but faith penetrates the promise, looks into its provisions, into its greatness, into its immutability; it cannot change. Faith says, heaven and earth are not as stable as this word is and faith says this word was given to me. O the revival, O the revival that a man gets. His humbled heart, his contrite spirit, now the Lord comes to and his faith is strengthened greatly. He answers to that word "And the people which do know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits". He will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet", whereas you may for days have been thinking of Him just in the way that the Psalmist did and that Job did, when Job said "The Almighty troubleth me" and David said that he thought on his ways and was troubled. And you may just feel the same; you may think on your ways and you think on your foolishness and on your pride and on your vanity and your vain ways, till you are sick and weary and faint and the Lord looks with approval upon you in that state of mind. He does not say it is legal and you ought not to indulge in it, but He does say this "I will revive him, I will go to him. He brought the ruin to his own spirit, but I will restore it. I will bless him." He revives the heart of the contrite ones by enabling their faith to remember the

holy promise. Perhaps He has said to some here "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee" and they may say, O but I am in darkness now, and I do not know where I am. But the Lord knows; He knows where you are, the dark place, the prison house. He knows all about it and He will revive you as He did Jeremiah on one occasion when he was in the low dungeon. Said Jeremiah, the Lord drew near and said unto me "Fear not". And what does the revived one feel? He feels afresh that he has a good God to go to, a Friend that loveth at all times, a Brother born for his adversity. He feels that now he can go to God. He loves a secret religion, he loves that privacy wherein he can find his very heart running out to the Almighty, casting his care on the Lord with some sweet hope that the Lord cares for him; casting his burden on the Lord with some sweet confidence that the Lord will sustain him and not suffer him to be moved. His heart rises to God. When he was low he could not lift his head up; it drooped like the bulrushes; it drooped. Now God lifts up his head. The grass that drooped under the drought lifts itself up when the rain comes and God thus revives sinners, His own children and they rise up in their revived spirits to Himself. Rise to His power and depend on it; to His love and live on it; to His merit and live in it; and to His graciousness and hope He will bring them honourably through all their trouble. My brethren, the contrite ones and the humble ones here this evening, what a God you have, what a God you have speaking these merciful, wonderful, beautiful, sublime words. I will come to the humble man, the man of low eyes, who thinks little of himself. I will come to him and I will revive his spirit and his heart and he shall know Me again. I have seen his ways; they have been foolish ways and wrong ways, ways which provoke Me to smite him. I have seen them and I see there is no hope of betterment in him, but I will heal him. May the Lord do it for us and bless us and bless His word.

AMEN.