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THE PLACE OF OUR SANCTUARY

SERMON

by

Mr J K POPHAM

preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton on Weds. evening 15th June 1927

Text: Jeremiah 17. v 12

A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our Sanctuary.

Israel was chosen for God's inheritance. He placed His Sanctuary in the midst of them. In the wilderness He had built for Him a Sanctuary. There He placed His name. There were the blessed types of Christ, and to that tabernacle, and afterwards to the temple which Solomon built, the people had always to resort. Their cases were to be taken there. There were to be offered all their sacrifices, and hard questions they had to ask must be asked there. Urim and Thummim must be there, and all communications that God would make to that favoured people He would make there. There was the oracle; there were the tokens of His favour; there was their safety, their glory. All their worship was to be there. Indeed, the whole of their life was just in that centre. Their strength, their prowess, their wealth, their godliness - all were there, and every turning away from that place, all their neglects of their worship there, all their not buying sweet cane, not taking their sacrifices, the ordained sacrifices, resulted in first of all their terrible idolatries, and then their captivities; and painfully they knew what is in this chapter: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17 v. 5). They were not steadfast in His covenant. They frequently went to Him with their lip, but their heart was far from Him, and they walked after commandments not given to them by Him, and increased their altars as they were fed and became fat. A typical sin was very early committed by them very soon after their deliverance from Egypt, when their faith was not strong enough to live forty days without Moses; so they had made for them a golden calf. They rose up early in the morning and feasted and danced and began to sing "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 32 v. 4). A gross idolatry, an abominable ascription of praise to a bit of gold! Well, dear gracious friends, you who know the Lord, can you pick up stones and throw at those foolish, sottish, idolatrous Jews, and say such wickedness is foreign to our nature, and therefore we will never practice it? Who could lift his face up and say 'Lord, I am clean in all those respects'? True, we have not fallen down to a golden calf, but have not our hearts departed from the living God? If you look at your chastenings apart from your sins, what will you say and what will you think indeed; but if the Holy Ghost teaches you that there is an intimate connection, the connection of cause and effect, between your sins and your troubles, you will come to a right conclusion respecting both yourselves and your God; "Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped" (Ezra 9 v. 15).

All this, dear friends, that I have named to you concerning Israel was typical. Their Sanctuary was typical; their sacrifices were typical; their worship was typical. The anti-type is before us: "a glorious high throne" - more glorious than the temple that Solomon built, more glorious than all the things that were connected with that religion that God gave and

commanded His people to have and observe; and we do greatly need that the Holy Ghost should bring us to this: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (v.7); and as the faith is so will be our loyalty, as our faith is so will be our worship, and so will be all the motions of our spirits Godward, and it may be that some of us here have a key in our own hearts and consciences to open to us and give us an understanding in the ease with which our hearts depart from the living God. I say ease; do you not find it, alas, easy to run away from Him when unbelief is dominant, when something in the world attracts you, and there is not a keener and more powerful attraction in the Lord Jesus moving in your heart? Oh, it is solemn to be departing from the Lord! It fills the soul with grief sometimes even to look at how one has departed from Him. But the Lord won't have this always. He is too good, and, I will say, too jealous to allow it, and if we do at any time realise the kind jealousy of the Lord Jesus, who really wishes and will have the hearts of His people, it will melt us into a contrition, and raise us up into an earnestness in seeking His gracious face and His powerful blessed presence. This throne then: it is set up, for God set it up from the beginning. It is the throne of His heavenly grace, to which He invites His people. A throne bespeaks a King: the King of kings and Lord of lords sitteth on this throne.

A sanctuary in olden days with the Jews had a two-fold significance. It was the place of worship. "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25 v. 8), said God to Israel. There they were to congregate. There they were to worship. Jesus is the sanctuary in this particular. He is the One in whom we are to worship, in whose name we are to ask blessings, whose name prevails in heaven, and prevails in the hearts of the Lord's people.

The second significance of a Sanctuary was a place of safety. Joab thought that if he fled into the temple and laid hold of the horns of the altar he would have a sanctuary; that is, he would be safe. Whoever finds his way into the Lord Jesus by the guidance of the Holy Ghost finds a place not only in which to worship, but in which he is absolutely and everlastingly safe. May the Lord help us then to look a little at this great word, "a glorious high throne."

High above the world, the house of the Lord is built on the top of the mountains, and the nations of the world are to flow to it. It is above the world. It is above reason; reason grovels in the earth. The highest pitch that reason can ever reach is that which is within the capacity of fallen man, and it belongs to the earth, belongs to something that a man is able under God to grasp, but this is above that - all that; it is above reason. It is above self-righteousness, self-strength, self-wisdom, self-goodness; so it is above a Pharisee. It is above human understanding, so it is above a Sadducee; but it is not too high for the publican. It is not too high for confessing sinners to-day, for troubled people. This is a high throne, built on the top of the mountains, as the ark of Noah rested on a high mountain and so was on and above it. Jesus Christ is above all. the earth, the highest of all high places; He is above them all, and there is nothing a child of God can more quickly, easily and comfortably reach than the Lord Jesus, under the teaching and by the gracious power of the Holy Ghost. It is a glorious throne! Glorious wisdom, glorious grace, glorious love, glorious power, glorious forgiveness, glorious justification, glorious sanctification, glorious perseverance in the way, and glorious victories over sin, death and hell - all, all are to be found and known and enjoyed in this sanctuary. We do look to the earth, and in doing that we depart from the Lord, but the Spirit's work is to take the hand of faith, so to speak, and direct it up to this Sanctuary, where the sinner says in his faith,

"In Thee I every glory view
Of safety, strength, and beauty too."

(Medley; Gadsby's sel. 173)

Every glory is seen in Jesus Christ. Could we but by faith abide here, we should be in a far different and better state than we are in for the most part. The stream of this earthly life is

very strong in all of us. It carries us downward to this earthly object, and to that creature and to something that the Lord disapproves. Oh, the stream of a carnal heart! Oh, the bent of a depraved nature, always away from God! But, says the Lord to His dear people, "Abide in Me. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15 v. 4). Do you feel any abiding in Him? Are the decays that come on you from time to time sore and grievous to you? Do you in your hearts crave to be brought near, and to be kept near to this fountain of all goodness, this glorious high throne, where every blessing is to be had and is dispensed? This is an amazing mercy! Said the Lord Jesus to His disciples, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15 v. 8). How much fruit do you bear, do I bear? The fruit of faith - is it in us? of love, is it in us? of meekness and humility and tenderness and gospel obedience, walking in the ways of God? Do we find this fruit? Vital godliness is a close thing. It will take you away from all the external trappings of religion sometimes, and bring you to very solemn dealings with God, with whom you have to do, and with whom you hope to live for ever. There is something inexpressibly wonderful and beautiful and effectual in the moving of the life of God in the soul - beautiful because it is away from this tarnished, this corrupted, corruptible life. Beautiful because God is the object of it, and effectual because, if I may express it so, it won't be put off with any imitation of God; it must have the real, the true and living God. He is seen here on this throne. On the mercy-seat, said the Lord to Moses, "I will meet with thee."¹ That is not an absolute thing. It is not an experience long since dead. There is to be, to the end of time and through Eternity, some contact with God. Here by faith, when you come to this throne; hereafter by immediate vision. Oh, I wish I knew what living near to this throne would mean in my soul! It is a glorious throne. A glorious Christ is on this throne. A glorious Christ is here, a fulness never to be exhausted, a power never to wane, a goodness never to fail, compassions always tender and moving towards the objects of it. Poor faint, fainting weak creatures, this is our place. A humble claim is here. "A glorious High Throne from the beginning is the place of our Sanctuary." My friends, sin has made all of us eccentric! Grace makes Christ the centre. Grace makes the sinner blessed with it say, 'I would be there. I would live near His heart, upon His bosom lean, and all His will esteem.' This throne is for sinners. Sinners alone are welcome - get a welcome. It is for sinners, and a very strong word we have concerning this in the Hebrews, where the Apostle by the Spirit of God says that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," and some of us know what that means in some way and measure, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the and joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4 v. 12). You will never be able to express what you have felt when some scripture has so to speak dissected you, analysed, brought to light hidden things. "A discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart!" Perhaps you have said inly, 'I never thought I had this. I never thought I was capable of that. I never thought my heart was so abominable.' "Neither," says the Spirit there, "is there any creature that is not ... naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (v. 13). Well of all things that a legal heart would say is impossible, this is it - impossible for such a person to be allowed to come to this glorious High Throne; and yet that person who gets this discovery is the person who is invited to this throne. Oh for faith to believe it! But, says Paul continuing there, "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (v. 15-6). Therefore look, O afflicted sinner, O Christ-longing sinner; look to this throne, this glorious throne, high

¹ "And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark ... and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Ex. 25 v. 22; see also Ex. 30 v. 6).

above your reason, above your legal conclusions, above unbelief and every wicked thought. That that says in you, 'Look to this throne, this glorious High Throne.

"The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here." (J Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 155)

Hart, that blessed man of God, the favourite hymnwriter of perhaps many of us - Hart says,

"Christ is the friend of sinners;
Be that forgotten never," (J Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 806)

And Christ says we are straitened in ourselves, not in him.² There is a fulness in Him, and we have it in the hymn book:

"A fulness resides in Jesus our Head
And ever abides to answer our needs." (Fawcett; Gadsby's Sel. 184)

"Come, then, repenting sinner, come." (J Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 23)

The gospel expresses what is to be had at this throne, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4 v. 16). Also, we are told of a river, "a pure river of water of life clear as crystal" (Rev. 22 v. 1), and again a river of pleasures at God's right hand for evermore,³ a river out of which He promises to pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground" (Isa. 44 v. 3) - to pour His Spirit upon them.

This throne is a safe place, a place of worship, a place of trading, buying without money and without price, a place where fruitfulness is, a place that will remove all the declensions and the decays, and the guilt and the barrenness produced by them. The approach to it - what is it? There are two things to be noticed with regard to reaching this throne of God's heavenly grace, and the first is the blood of the everlasting covenant. This is expressed in the Hebrews, where the Apostle says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10 v. 19). O sinner, when you, by faith, would reach God, this is the way to Him - the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second motion is the grace of faith, the grace upon which God has put very singular honour. "Only believe", He said to a poor distressed man, a distressed Father, "Only believe" (Mark 5 v. 36). These two things make up a good way of approaching God, of coming to this glorious high throne. The precious blood of Christ: no well-grounded hope is there in any heart that has not this for its ground, this for its foundation. No acceptable prayer will ever reach the ear of God but through the precious blood of Christ. No expectation of deliverance will ever fill your heart with proper expectation but by the blood of the everlasting covenant. There is no way for a smile of God to reach your barren heart and make a summer in it, but by the blood of Jesus Christ. In all approaches to God, may this be the constant cry of our hearts, to name, to plead the blood of Christ! John tells us in his epistle that "the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1 v. 7). Ah, it is a wonderful thing to plead it, *really* to plead it, to feel that your heart is set on it as on the only cure for the great and terrible malady of sin! Wait on Him in and through this precious blood. That faith that lays hold of the Lamb, that faith that looks to God in Christ, that believes every good thing concerning God in Christ, that believes there is no malady He cannot cure, no sin He cannot subdue, no devil He cannot bruise under your feet, and no evil out of which He cannot bring good - faith, oh faith, blessed faith! It is God's gift, and it honours Him. It comes from Him and goes to Him, in its gracious acting by the Spirit. It stands in the fear of God, not in the wisdom of man. It cries and it is Bunyan who has a terse word about it. He says faith acts in two manner of ways - first it walks as long as it can, and second it cries when it can walk no longer; and you will

² "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels" (2 Cor. 6 v. 12).

³ Ps. 16 v. 11; Ps. 36 v. 8.

find faith in your hearts will always be in one of those two states or conditions. When you can walk it is good, and when you cannot then it cries. Blessed faith! It gives us access by faith: "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5 v. 2). By faith we honour God. By faith we look for a fulfilment of His promise. By faith we can put Him to the test. Prove Me now wherewith by faith a barren heart is made fruitful, bringing "good news from a far country" (Prov. 25 v. 25). Oh then, may we have these two necessary things for coming to this great, this divine and divinely set up throne!

Our Sanctuary is, as I said, for worship. Every regenerated sinner worships God, and sometimes he worships God with a spiritual intelligence; that is to say, he realises that he is approaching the Almighty. He feels it, and his whole soul worships. I have said, and I will here repeat it, that worship may be said to include the whole of vital religion; and if you are enabled to look into it, you will perceive it to be so. Faith is in it. Love is in it. Humility is in it. Adoration, admiration, humble hope, holy confidence, familiarity, uprightness, tenderness - everything that a sinner wants to feel he has, though he may not always realise the whole of it, he has when he truly worships God.

"Worship God, then, in His Son;
There He's love and there alone."

(J Hart; Gadsby's Sel. 789)

O worshipper, if you fall before the Lord and worship Him, you are accepted. If you praise Him in worship, then you are accepted. If you give thanks in worship, you are accepted. If you groan and sigh under oppression, then He looks on you in pity at this place. Oh, it is a place of worship, a happy place, a comfortable place; a repose there is, and it is felt. What a favour to worship God, not by the tradition of men but by the faith of His own operation, perceiving the Eternal Son of God in our own nature, divinity's indwelling rays beaming through His sacred humanity, His eternal love making itself, I was going to say vocal, in this blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father beaming through Him upon the soul! If we got here more we should more answer to that word in the psalms concerning the righteous, that the righteous is as a palm-tree. He is "planted in the house of the Lord." He grows as the cedar. He is fruitful as the palm-tree, and this, brought out by the Holy Ghost, makes a person fruitful in old age, fat and flourishing, "to show that the Lord is upright," and that "there is no unrighteousness in Him;"⁴ and you dear young people who have life and faith in your souls, you are planted here, and *do* seek that God would grant that you may be made fruitful in the knowledge of God.

Secondly, the Sanctuary is a place of safety. The cities of refuge were sanctuaries, and no man-slayer could enter one of those cities to bring out one whom he had pursued entering the city. The man-slayer was safe. Entering Jesus Christ, a poor guilty creature is safe. It was very significant in respect of these cities and the entrance of a man-slayer therein, that that poor man was safe during the lifetime of the High Priest in whose day he entered. No one could fetch him out. O sinner, if you enter by faith into the Lord Jesus, as long as He, your great High Priest, lives, you are safe.

These two wonderful things respecting this glorious High Throne the saints must long to know and have some experience of from time to time. Depend upon it, that man, if he *has* grace, has very *little* grace, who does not at times pant to enter into this Sanctuary, there to worship, and there to perceive that he is safe, there to receive all the goodness of God, there to be made fruitful in the knowledge of God.

⁴ "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Ps. 92 v. 12-5).

Well now, dear friends, look at this great matter. I have brought it before you feebly indeed, but I have brought it before you as well as I could, and now may it be given to us to see by self-examination whether we know what it is to enter into this sanctuary by precious faith. A living needy sinner enters into it by precious faith. He worships there. God is the object of his worship. He lives there in his affections. He trusts the Saviour to save him. He leans on omnipotence for support. He looks to divine wisdom for guidance. He trusts divine fulness for supply. He sees all in this Sanctuary. Outside there is death; within there is life and everything that can adduce to life, to liveliness, to peace, to happiness, to joy. Everything is in this Sanctuary. Would sin destroy you? Here there is safety. Would Satan devour you? God shall bruise him under your feet. Would death swallow you up? Christ swallowed up death. O death, there is no victory, no triumph for thee, for Christ swallowed up death! A glorious high throne for poor sinners! This is its wonder and its beauty in a particular way to every sensible sinner, that God has set this throne up for sinners. Sinners are high in the esteem of Christ.

Now if one should say, 'But I have got no religion,' I should say that that is a very good thing for you. Your esteem of what is religion may be very wrong. You may have vital godliness, and not know it, and you may be looking for religion in things which would not constitute religion if you had them. 'Oh, but if I had a repenting heart, a broken heart!' You will have all here if ever you get into this Sanctuary by faith; you will have all that you want, all that you crave. Then be this the object of search, not to get religion such as you would be pleased with, but to be pulled into this while you are a poor perishing sinner, there to find safety, and there to be clothed with a religion that God gives, to be filled with grace that flows from Him, and to be strengthened with strength in your soul to put on the Lord Jesus, and to deny self and mortify through the Spirit the deeds of the body.

May the Lord bring us to this for His great Name's sake. Amen.