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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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JEREMIAH 30 v 11

"For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished"

Israel was in captivity; the reproach of sin was upon her; she was in the power of her enemies. The captivity was to be long; 70 years were to be accomplished in the captivity of that sinful nation. They saw many gods, false gods, images of wood and of stone. They were invited to sing the Lord's songs in a strange land, and they were unable to do so. They hung their harps on the willows; they remembered Jerusalem and all the pleasant things they had in the days when God shined upon them in His favour. They were brought so low as to be willing to give all their pleasant things for food. Their skin was black and their gates were burnt down to the ground and apparently there was none to deliver them. But, as we were noticing last Wednesday evening, God had kind thoughts of them, and had determined to bring them back at the appointed time and to give them an end of their captivity and an expectation of better days. In this chapter the Lord continues to speak to them as captives and yet to show that He had among them men who feared Him and were in trouble about their state, and now He comes to speak exceedingly kindly to them and bids them not to fear, because that He, their Lord, would save them from afar, that is bring them from Babylon, as we know He did, and that their seed should come back, that Jacob should return and be in rest. He had forgotten his resting place days without number before his captivity but now, remembering those resting places, God said I will bring you again and you shall be in quiet and in rest and none shall make you afraid. And then, in the words of the text, He says, Jacob I will bring you back, I am with you to save you. What, God with people whom He had forsaken, whom He had sent into captivity into Babylon?

Yes, even with them; He was with them and there were signs of His presence; there were many signs of His presence. One was that He preserved them, a distinct people, all through their long captivity and even today. But then, through their long captivity God kept them a distinct people. They were not Babylonians; they were known to be Jews. They were marked as Jews, mocked as Jews. As Jews they had set before them temptations to worship false gods. They were known to be the people of God; indeed captive, but still the people of God. Another mark was this, that they were surrounded by false gods and, as the Lord had told them before they were taken into captivity, they should know His service by contrast, they should see plenty of gods. They had rejected the worship of the One God who had done so much for them. He said you shall see plenty of gods, but apparently they were kept from worshipping them. Their hearts were toward Zion. If I forget thee, O Zion; O Jerusalem, if I prefer thee not before my chief joy, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. They were remarkably preserved in the providence of God. Even as when they were in the wilderness they were nightly covered with the flame of fire, they were daily led by the pillar of smoke, a great cloud. They were, morning by morning, supplied with the day's bread and they were continually followed by living water, rushing from a smitten rock. So in their captivity they were providentially preserved; they had God about them. Another mark was this, that they prayed. In their captivity, they prayed. As it is written in the preceding chapter - Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and gather you from all the nations. They prayed and these were the marks that distinguished them from their captors who refused for so long to let them go.

Now, leaving this, let us, as enabled, look at the spiritual Israel, the Church of God in Jesus Christ, with whom He has made an everlasting covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure. Is she in captivity? Is the Church of God today in captivity? Who would say, no? Who would say she is at liberty? Who would say that she is free; free from sin, free from Satan, free from temptation? And when I say that, I mean free from the dominion of these things. In some

measure, in some form, there is a terrible captivity today in the church of the living God. And is she preserved? Has she about her, on her, any marks of being different from the world that has captured her? Yes, there is the providence of God about the people of God, always a particular, special providence. Wee see this in Scripture. Let me give you a few instances, first with respect to persons. Particular people of God, individual men, have been in trouble, in captivity, in affliction, and yet they have been marked by some special providence preserving them. Abraham went down into Egypt and he was singularly preserved from evil; Isaac also. Jacob was 20 years with Laban and afflicted all those years, his wages changed ten times. By day he was consumed of the heat and by night bitten of the frost, and yet the Lord preserved him, was with him, and saved him from the evil which otherwise must have consumed and brought him to an end. There were three godly men once who preferred the furnace before worshipping a false god, and there came to them One like unto the Son of God, and walked with them. I suppose that they never had a pleasanter walk all the days of their lives than they had in that fiery furnace. There was a time when a wicked man arose and sought, not to overcome one man, but the whole nation, and his plot all but succeeded, but on that night that it was to be brought to fruition, on that night, could not the king sleep. His sleep fled away from him and God took care of the people who were sold to be slain. There is a providence over the Lord's people still; they are to be preserved. No captivity shall swallow them up, assimilate them with their captors. They shall always be distinct and distinguished in some way. If you, any of you, are in captivity in your soul's experience, if some snare hold you, if some wrong thing has carried you away from the throne of grace, how is it with you? Does the providence of God not, as it were, forbid that you should become like the things which have taken hold of you and captured you? It is a great thing to be preserved from the abominations by which we are surrounded and by which, in some ways, we are affected. If you cannot worship, to your heart's delight and content, the true and living God, are you left to fall down to other gods and worship them? Has spiritualism captured you? Has Arminianism captured you? Do you fall down to false gods set forth by those horrible systems? 'Tis a great mercy when the hand of God is upon His people to preserve them even in providence, giving them a sort of feeling of the awful evils by which they are

surrounded.

Another mark of people having the Lord with them in captivity is this, that they pray. You may not get the comfortable access that you have in former days enjoyed, you may not have the enlargement that your hearts have had in days past. There may not be given to you those manifestations of mercy, of the Person of Christ, those applications of His atoning blood, those motions of His good Spirit in your hearts, but is it not so with you that you remember the Lord afar off? It is a great thing to have a remembrance of the Lord afar off, as one said - "O that I were as in the months that are past when the candle of God shone upon me", and there is a prayer going out of the heart - "Return O Lord and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants". "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence". There is a sort of pain in the heart by the very remembrance that you have of former days which are better to you than these, and there is a cry to God that He would return and restore to you the years that the palmerworm and the caterpillar and the locust and cankerworm hath eaten. O Thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth. Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, shine forth. Look down from heaven and behold this vine trampled under foot, look at this hedge broken down, see what the boar out of the forest has done. Look at what the wild beast has done and turn us again O God of our salvation and cause Thy face to shine, so shall we be saved. People who are in captivity are not left prayerless. Though God says, I will go and return to My own place, yet He still is with them in secret touches, attractions, motions of His power whereby He enables, constrains them to pray. If you read the book of Lamentations you will see this, while Jerusalem was remembering in the days of her affliction, all her pleasant things, and while she was willing to give all that she had then, even for bread to relieve her, her heart was heaven-ward, her ways were mourning. The ways of Zion do mourn, none come to her solemn feasts. Yet the cry was for God. Turn us again O God and we shall be turned. Save us and we shall be saved. That is a sign of this word - "I am with thee to save thee", with thee in thy captivity to save thee from being overcome, from being assimilated, from being like those who are your captors, who refuse to let you go.

Another sign of God's presence with the captives is this, that He keeps them alive in famine. Though they do not get the bread they seek to relieve their souls, they are kept alive in famine. You may have the reproach of famine upon you and yet be kept alive. What is the reproach of famine? It is the sin that brought it. Generally speaking, in the Scripture, famine is sent as punishment for sin; therefore famine is reproachful. God says He will roll away from His people the reproach of famine. But while it lasts? What if it lasts long? I will keep them alive in famine. He will feed you with hunger. He will, as Rutherford says, - "The Lord's wise love will feed you with hunger and make you fat with desertions". The very hunger of your soul will keep you from outward works, and take you to the throne of grace and some glimpses of God will keep you alive. Some hints of mercy will keep you alive. Some "Fear not" will keep you alive. Some hope in the goodness of God, in His faithful promises, in His unalterable covenant, will keep you alive in famine, and this is a sign that God is with His people even when they are in captivity. "I am with thee saith the Lord to save thee". To save thee from the evils which are felt and feared. Evils feared by the Lord's people are never fully realised by them. It is the things we do not fear that come. If you don't fear the prevalence of sin, you are under it. If you don't fear the evil of further guilt, you already have guilt, further guilt. But when people are afraid of evil, then they are led to pray, and the evil they fear never fully comes upon them. "I am with thee to save thee", to save thee from being swallowed up. Ah the enemy may boast of what he has accomplished. He may even point to you the gold and silver vessels of the Lord's house which he has carried away. The enemy may point to you some of your lost things. You have left your first love, he will tell you. How the glory of God as you thought was upon you, and how the Spirit of truth was in you and how you walked at liberty with God and at large in the Name of Christ; he may point out these things to you even as the Babylonians might have said to the Jews, you people, you are not now favoured. Why, here are all the symbols of your glory, your gold and silver vessels and knives and forks and all the things which God ordained to be used in His service; we have got all of them. And the enemy may come just like that to you, you thought once you were at liberty, that Christ was with you; you called Him your own, but not so now. Says the Lord, I am with you to save you. The enemy may say, I will never let you go.

Pharaoh said he would not let Israel go, but that did not matter; when God's day had come to take them away they went away, they were delivered. And the enemy may say to you, you will never get out of my clutches, you have sold yourself, you have done evil. And conscience says, it is too true, too true. The enemy says you did not prize your privileges when you had them and conscience says it is too true. Then says the enemy, the consequence is this, we do not sin when we deal thus with you. They said so of old, we do not sin. You have sinned, you have sinned; we do not sin in doing this. O said Assyria, I will take cities and not a few. He was doing God's service when he was carrying out the proud designs and ambitions of his heart. What said the Lord? Then I will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria. You, My people, may fear extermination; you shall be saved; he shall be destroyed. I am with you to save you, and you shall never fully realise the things, the evils, that you fear. "I am with thee to save thee". Be glad then, O land, for the Lord will do great things. Ye mountains of Israel, ye shall be tilled and sown saith the Lord. "I am with thee to save thee". O captives, lift up your heads. Shame covers you, and that rightly. Bones which were not seen now stick out by reason of famine, but a good God says, I am with you to save you.

"I will make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee". Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Mount Seir, all enemies to the saints, having used all their power, permitted power, against Israel, these nations, where are they? God has made a full end of them. "Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee". And God will make a full end of all the enemies that His people have ever had and shall have. Popery has done much against the saints, but God has a judgment for Popery. He will make a full end of it one day. All those dens of iniquity, all those blasphemies against Christ and against His great one and only sacrifice for sins, all the pollutions of that abominable system shall one day be swallowed up. God will make a full end. She has hurt the saints but she herself shall be destroyed. There is a cup prepared for her to drink and she will drink the very dregs of it, and so the whole world. You had better be up to your knees in blood of suffering and martyrdom than be with those who inflict the suffering and the martyrdom. There is a Prince; He shall come forth for His people and stand to deliver

them. "Though I make a full end". You may look my friends for this, you may look for the destruction of all enemies. You may look for the Lord's vindication of His people. What have I here, says the Lord by Isaiah, that My people is taken away for nought and they that carry them captive make them to howl and every day continually My Name is blasphemed. What then? O, says the Lord, I will deliver them; My people shall know. He rends the heavens; He comes down; He commands deliverances for Jacob. But there is a solemn word following - "Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee". No, they shall be My people and I will be their God. That shall stand through all; that shall bring them forth from all trouble. The new covenant of which this prophet speaks in the immediate neighbourhood of this text, the new covenant stands. I will make a new covenant with them, saith the Lord. Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers which My covenant they brake, though I was an husband unto them. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with them after those days saith the Lord; they shall be My people. I will put My law into their heart and write it in their mind, 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 of them saith the Lord, for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more for ever.

I will not make a full end of thee. All your false things, all your beautiful trappings and ornaments of external goodness and that kind of thing, God will consume, utterly consume. If you build on the foundation that God has laid in Zion, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, the fire shall try every man's work. The wood, hay, stubble, shall be burnt. The gold, silver, and precious stones shall remain. And then every man shall receive praise of God according to that blessed work of grace, that building of gold, silver, and precious stones. But in the consuming of the wood, hay and stubble, each shall suffer loss; each shall suffer loss. I wont make a full end. I will make an end of some things, but I wont make a full end of you. What a word this is. Take courage captives; take courage you who have much in your hearts that you fear and which you see in God to make you fear; the covenant stands - I will not make a

full end of thee. The Lord does not stop here, He here uses a trembling word - "But I will correct thee in measure". God's measure is not infinite as here He speaks. A full end is an end that shall never, never cease; no restoration. God's measure may be measured by years; it may be measured by days. It is affliction for a time; that is what it means; affliction for a time, something for a season - that by Isaiah - a small moment. Though I have forsaken thee for a small moment, yet will I gather thee. With everlasting mercy will I gather thee. The measure is a moment; the gathering is everlasting. You have the same truth in Paul's word - "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". "I will correct thee". Correction - when God uses the rod to correct - may be on several accounts. It may be in providence. You may have made a bag for your wages and put the wages into it and God may make holes in it to let them out and that is a correction. You may have said you had got enough and God may have said, I will reduce it; that is a correction. Perhaps some of you may know what this means, that the things you have laid up or thought you had, the things which appeared to you solid, He has made them liquid and they ran away. "I will correct thee in measure". The correction may be by the solemn rebukes of God in your conscience. He may leave the outsides untouched but within you may have the most painful experience; a frown, a cutting rebuke, a word that convinces you of what you have been doing; shows you where you are, your destitution. "I will correct thee". It may be in some darkness sent upon your spirit. The sun might go down in the day time. It is said it shall be. The sun shall go down in the day, go down on the prophets. God may hide the face of His throne with a thick cloud and command the sun not to shine by reason of the cloud that cometh betwixt, and I know of no chastening of the Lord more solemn than that, when He hides His lovely face, when you cannot see the Saviour, when you seek the cross and cannot get near to it, when you seek redemption and are held in captivity. O it is solemn when God corrects people with darkness. There is a cloud on Zion which is her protection. There may be a cloud on the throne which is her punishment for a season. "I will correct thee in measure". Did you ever thank God for His measure? I have thanked Him for this word "measure". Unmeasured punishment is hell. Measured correction is mercy and issues in salvation. Measured correction will never make a full end of the man who is the subject of

it. Measured correction will do you good, make you sober, bring you to your knees, open your heart to God, turn you from idols, specially the idol, self. Measured correction comes from the covenant of grace - If his children forsake My law and walk not in My statutes then will I visit their transgressions with the rod and their iniquity with stripes.

"I will correct thee". I wont leave thee altogether unpunished. I will leave the world alone for a time - "I pray not for the world" - but I do not leave these at all. "I am with thee to save thee". I am with thee to correct thee; I am with thee to do thee good. My brethren we ought to fall down on our knees and bless God for correcting us. If ye be not chastised ye are bastards and not sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent". O the mercy of being corrected, of being corrected in measure. You may measure God's correction; you will never measure His mercy in correcting in measure. Mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Love divine is unalterable, unchangeable, unloseable. The rod will speak of love one day and the wise man will hear the rod and the God who has appointed it. He will hear what it says, he will hear it speaking to him in love. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". I correct, I train, I guide, I save. "I will not leave thee altogether unpunished". People who can say they have no trouble have no reason to thank God for that. I speak generally, for of course there is no man without trouble. But people who get no trouble from God, no frown, no correction, no word of rebuke, have no reason to thank God that they are so blessed. The people who should thank God for His goodness are the people whom He has loved well enough to teach and correct; people whom He has loved well enough to be determined with. Determined that they shall learn what sin is; determined that they shall learn what grace is; determined that they shall learn what an evil thing it is to depart from God, and determined that they shall come back in God's own way, by His own teaching, and His own correction. Brethren let us look then to this blessed God, this God of all grace in covenant in Christ and wait on Him in all the captivities that we may experience and thank Him for a hope that we have a part in this sweet word "measure". I cannot express it, but it is a sweet word. It has heaven's light upon it, and heaven's mercy in it, and it is measured by time. May the Lord grant we may enter into it.

AMEN.