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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 30 June 1929

JEREMIAH 30 v 22

"And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God"

This follows the gracious word we were considering this morning. It is a miracle of sovereign love that God should have a people, a people differing from the world, separated from it. A people differing from themselves, hating themselves, denying themselves. A people for whom Christ prays; He prayed not for the world. A people united to the Son of God, called His body, His wife. A people bought with blood, the blood of God, and quickened by the Holy Ghost, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. There are striking characteristics, in the Scriptures, of these people. "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom". Not everyone that professes the doctrines of divine, sovereign grace; not everyone baptised in the Name of the Lord. And, seeing there is a difference put between the world and the church, a wall of separation built by God Himself, it is a matter of very deep importance to us to see and know whether we are among this people. "Ye shall be My people". What is the beginning of true religion, all proper separation from the world? The Scripture answers the question: "Ye must be born again". And it declares that the new birth is a new creation. "Created in Christ Jesus". "Created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created him". This beginning is so different in the manner and the measure of it that it is often, with many of the Lord's people doubtless, a very searching question. Am I His? Am I born again? Have I received a definite call? Has the Holy Spirit taken up His abode in me? Has He truly convinced me of sin? Have I had repentance? Do I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has the enmity of my nature been broken? And when such questions exercise the mind, it is not an evil thing, rather a blessing, because it takes the exercised ones to their knees, to the throne of grace. It makes the hymn we sometimes sing truly a felt hymn

'Tis a point I long to know

Oft it causes anxious thought

What would some of you - I think I judge rightly in this - what would some of you give to know that you are born again? The world, if you had it, at some moments you would gladly part with to know that. And how are you to know it? Shall you go into yourselves? Shall you seek to find repentance? Shall you measure yourself and state by the softness of heart, the fervency of desire, the continuance in prayer? If you do, I will tell you the conclusion you will arrive at, namely that you are dead, because those graces which you so desire to have will, as being in you, appear to you so short, so lacking, as that you wont be able to believe that one, so prayerless, so wavering, so unsettled, so wandering, as yourselves, can really have the life of God. How then are you to come to a conclusion that God has quickened you? I will tell you. His own testimony in your hearts. I know nothing else and I do not think the Scripture will give you any other direction. Seek the Lord, seek His testimony. "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation". The blood of Christ will answer the questions that you may often have. The blood of Christ will purify your consciences from dead works. The blood of Christ will give you all the sweet repentance you desire to have, break your heart, warm your heart, kindle love to Christ, loyal attachment to Him, desires to abide in Him. The blood of Christ will cure you of your diseases, heal your wounds, bind up your broken bones, and unite you to the Lord Himself. Do not seek any other remedy any other assurance. But some may say, we have been seeking that that you have set before us for years, and have not attained to it. Well, I would say, go on seeking as well as you can, as earnestly as need may press you, as a sense of ruin may move you; go on seeking. May you dread, may I dread, a state of satisfaction not derived from the testimony of God in the conscience. But sin, this is the stumble; O, how we stumble at this, sin in the members, sin rising, moving, prevailing; there is no remedy for that but the healing balm of the Saviour; no remedy. Measure yourselves by others and you will be always falling and failing, but if you are enabled, in your nakedness and shame and guilt and weakness and fear to fly to the Saviour, fly, as Hart advises, to the throne of grace - he says, "your case admits no stay" - if you are enabled to do that, the day will come when you will say, I have seen the Lord and you will know it when you see Him. And this answers to being restored and to being built on your own heap; all the rubbish of sin, of evil, and all the pain and felt ruin that God's judgments have brought to you. I

will restore health, says the Lord; that is the remedy. "Ye shall be My people". O, it is wonderful to belong to God. It is wonderful to belong to God. Go on seeking; it means heaven in the end.

Now these people are His in several particular ways. They are His first, by divine choice of them. Thine they were, by eternal election. You may stumble at that, but that is the truth. Thine they were; "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God". Let men say what they will against it, this is the truth. God owes to men nothing but punishment and it is a good thing to believe that. There is no sinner in the world who has a just claim on God for salvation. He owes us, here, nothing but punishment, and one of the best things a sinner can have from time to time is this, that he falls flat in his spirit before God - does not quarrel with Him - and says, I do deserve hell. I acknowledge my sinfulness, and all I can say is, guilty, guilty. God elected whom He would; He has mercy on whom He will have mercy; He hardens whom He will harden. We have to do with this glorious Being, holy, holy, holy. There is an awfulness in the sovereignty of God in election, but there is a mercy, never to be expressed, in election. It is a wicked thing for ministers to tell sinners that they can give their hearts to God and make them believe that God is a debtor to them by their obedience and their religion. It is a cruel thing to say. The most merciful thing that ever can come to a sinner is to be chosen unto salvation. "They shall be My people". God separated Israel for Himself, a type of His eternal separation of His people in and by Jesus Christ. They are His by purchase. "Feed the Church of God" is the direction of the Apostle to the elders at Ephesus. "Feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood". O, the precious blood of Christ; God accepted it. When Christ gave Himself a sacrifice for sin it was a sweet smelling savour. God rested in the atonement of Christ; He rests in it today; the atonement satisfies God. I would bring that before you because, if God is not satisfied, if His justice is not pleased, if His holiness is not honoured, if His law is not fulfilled, there can be no rest for a sinner. God rests in Christ; He smells a sweet savour in the atonement of Christ. And eventually that in which God rests will be the rest of the soul that feels guilt and disturbance. Look to this. The blood of Christ will separate you from evil in yourselves and from the world. The blood of Christ, a precious blood, I say appeased God and it will appease

your conscience. And here I would remark upon the greatness of true religion; that nothing can pacify a guilty conscience but that which pacifies God. O, on what a high plain this puts vital religion, and what an answer it is to the cries of a guilty conscience. O, what an answer it is to the question - "What shall I do to be saved?" What an answer it is to the soul that cannot rest without God and yet feels so much sin and wickedness and deformity and demerit as to feel there is no ground for hope. Certainly there is no ground for hope in self, but this blood, this precious blood, this justice-satisfying blood, this God-pleasing atonement, this, this, does satisfy the conscience. That is how a sinner becomes the Lord's. That is how he is enabled to say, Thine am I, Lord Jesus and on Thy side Thou Son of God. Nor does it seem too great a claim to make when the conscience is appeased and there is no guilt remaining on it. And if I may here interject a remark, it is this; this does set before every seeker a blessed end to his crying, his sighing, his discontent with himself; the blood of Christ. It cleanseth from all sin. And "if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". And this is the wonderful explanation of some things; of one thing, for instance, the perplexity that a seeking soul has felt more or less continually by the lack, the failure, of which he is painfully the subject. Why, he says, I get all my graces from the blood of Christ. I receive every sweet motion Godward from the atonement of Christ. I am content with God's providence by the efficacy of the blood of Christ. I can kiss the rod, and confess my sins, and repentance is produced, by the blood of Christ. And, dear friends, what more can be needed? "They shall be My people" by purchase, a blessed purchase, and Christ will not part with that purchase.

I mentioned the new birth, so now I go on to make another remark. "They shall be My people" by a sacred choice of Him. They shall choose the Lord. Well now, some may say, that seems like cutting us off. Well now, if you had your choice, what would you do, and where would you be, from time to time? Shall I name Mary to you? She sat at the feet of the dear Redeemer, and when Martha, busy with her affectionate desire to entertain the Lord, seemed jealous of Mary in that quiet, said to Him - bid her help me - O, said He "She hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her". I say there is

a deliberate, a solemn, a sober choice made by God's children and people, of the Lord Himself. Can you answer to it? Does it meet you? Put the case another way, this way. He was despised and rejected of the people and they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. Does that meet your case? Is He despised by you? Is He rejected by you? Well, you could not honestly say that is the case, could you? No. Often the question may be, if I try to get at His feet, I cannot, but I would be there if I could. "All His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words." There it is even by choice. Faith chooses Him; love chooses Him; a repenting soul chooses Him; one who would be saved from sin makes choice of Him; one who would lose himself in Jesus Christ chooses Him; one who would be often clothed in Christ's righteousness, cleansed by Christ's blood, and indwelt by Christ Himself, and by His Spirit, chooses Him. They shall be My people. "Ye shall be My people". You have lived in Babylon, you have seen gods of wood and stone, plenty of them, and your heart has ached, and desired to be delivered, and now I will deliver you and you shall serve Me. The covenant promise is: I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord, and they shall fear Me and not depart from Me. And He says this, too: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me". What then? Wretches, will He receive them? Wicked people, deceitful people, vile people, with hearts full of deceit, desperate wickedness, will He have anything to do with them? He says "I will in no wise cast out". O, the coming is a great mercy, and the reception is a melting mercy. The coming is by faith, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and the reception is by love; a loving embrace and welcome, and kiss and smile. "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" "Ye shall be My people". They are His by separation. Separation - not a pleasing thing. They shall cast you out of the synagogue. The time will come when everyone that will kill will think he does God's service. There is a separation. "I pray not for the world but for the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world. Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me". They have to come out of the world, its honours, its pleasures, its ways; its enmity, its ignorance, its death. They have to come away from all these. They are free among the dead. God will have it. I will bring you out of Babylon, He said; it is not your home. I will bring you to My own place, namely to Myself. There is a separation; a separation from self, and this is the hardest thing,

the denial of self; what a favour to deny self. "They shall be My people". They shall be My people by faith in Me, and by hope in Me, and by love to Me, by leaving all things for My sake. They come straight to that word by the Holy Ghost sometimes: "If a man love father or mother and other things more than Me he is not worthy of Me. And strongly does the Lord put it: If a man hate not his father and his mother and all other things he is not worthy of Me; he cannot be My disciple. Are we the Lord's? A good many people claim that privilege; they did of old. It is reported in this prophecy of Jeremiah that many said: "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we", but He did not own them. And many will say in the last day: Lord, Lord, we have taught in Thy Name; done wonders in Thy Name. A very bold thing to say. You would not find the Lord's people talking like that. Then will He profess unto them, I never knew you. I never had anything to do with you while you were in this world. He could not say that to some of you, could He? He has had to do with you, and you have had dealings with Him. They are His in these ways. And they are His in His doctrines; there is an abiding in the doctrine of Christ; there is a reception of the doctrine of Christ. There is a reception of the doctrine of truth, the doctrine of divine grace. And to abide in these is to have the Father and the Son. These restored Jews were His people. When brought back, by their worship, in their worship, they honoured Him. They had seen plenty of gods and now they were brought back to the true and the living God. And to the Thessalonians the Apostle says: Our word came unto you not in word only but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and you received it in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, and you turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come. Worship? It is a great thing to be a worshipper of God; a wonderful thing to be a worshipper of God. They are His in various circumstances; in the fire, in the flood, in affliction, in the low dungeon; He owns them, my friends, He owns them. Therefore He says, "I will be your God". A few words on this. O, to have a God, the true and living God. What can be like it? The world passeth away, but to have God for your God, the eternal God, what a mercy. The Psalmist found it so. He was afflicted and he saw that all things, heaven and earth and every other thing would pass away. Then he comes to this: "But Thou remainest" In the Hebrews it is: "Thou art the

same"and it is this also: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever". Have we God for our God? How shall I know it? says one. By His blessing you, speaking to you, helping you, sustaining you, guiding you, fortifying you against your enemies, indwelling sins and other things. By His drawing you to Himself and by His drawing near to you enabling you to roll your cares and burdens on Him, to find Him to be your burden-bearer as He was your sin-bearer. That will answer the question. Many and many a thing you may think about God and about whether you have an interest in Him, but the one thing that will settle the question is God owning you. He does know His people. When they are ashamed of themselves He is not ashamed to call them brethren, not ashamed to call a wretch a brother; not ashamed to come near to a sinner and dwell in his heart. Then, when He owns them like that, they are happy. "In Thy presence I am happy". That is so; it makes you happy in trouble; you rest in trouble. It gives you peace in warfare; it gives you ease under every burden; it gives you comfort in all the discomforts and miseries of this mortal state. O, the presence of God is the blessing of blessings. "And I will be their God". And He is their God to heal them of all their diseases. The disease of sin, the leprosy of sin, the prevalence of some particular sins. Being your God, you have found, and will find to the end, that He has healed you. "I am the Lord that healeth thee". "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely". Yea, He heals their barrenness. "From Me is thy fruit found". He heals all waters that have death in them, that is afflictions. There is a tree which, when cast into all poisoned waters, heals them. When He comes, it is so; He heals the soul. "I will restore health unto thee and I will heal thy wounds". And He does this in respect of chastisement. "I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy and chastised thee with the chastisement of a cruel one". Many of God's dealings have that appearance. Many of them are so wounding that it seems as if only an enemy could give such wounds. But He says, I have done it in love. He said in another chapter in this prophecy of Jeremiah that He sent some of His people from Jerusalem to Babylon for their good. And He sends trouble to people and puts people into a fire for their good. "I will be your God". There is a word in this chapter that has been a healing word and a most comfortable word to me more than once. "I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" The word

"measure" has been a solace. O, to think that your troubles and God's chastisement will have an end; not measureless punishment which would mean hell, but punishment for a time, punishment in a measure; chastisement to endure for a moment only; that to be succeeded by an everlasting embrace and the fulfilling of the covenant of grace - "I will never leave thee". Yes, but we are very apt to conclude that chastisement is a sword to devour us, but it is not so. Cheer up, ye troubled people, lift your heads up, though you are chastened, for God will come and make Himself known. The typical people of Israel should be an instruction and comfort to all chastised people. They were solemnly and severely chastised for their sins, but they were kindly restored, powerfully delivered and helped and healed again and again, and so it will be to the end. "I will be their God". I will be their God, in the next place, to nourish them. These dying bodies of ours receive nourishment daily by food and our immortal souls need nourishment. The Apostle Paul speaks of it to Timothy; the nourishing up in the words of sound doctrine, good doctrine. What a favour it is to be nourished by doctrine, the doctrine of the gospel, the gospel of forgiveness, the gospel of comfort, the gospel of the blessed Spirit's teaching and grace, the promised Spirit. He comes and He nourishes; He gives the bread of life, manifests the Saviour. "I will be their God". If you get nothing from God it looks very serious. Communications from God keep faith alive; they nourish faith, they strengthen hope, they excite love again and again. Communications from God are the gifts of bread and water to keep the soul alive in famine, and in connection with this there is the word in Ezekiel that has at times appeared to me beautiful. He said to His people "I will roll away the reproach of famine"; "I will roll away the reproach of famine". Why is famine a reproach? Because sin occasions it. Ah, you will say sometimes, my sin has procured God's silence. But when He returns in love to fulfil His Word to you, and to fulfil His covenant with Christ and with you, then it is that He rolls away that reproach and He takes the yoke off your jaws and lays meat to you and says: "Eat, O friends, and drink; yea, drink abundantly O beloved." "I will be their God". I will be their God to guide them. The cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night guided Israel, and so He guides His people. And the gospel promise is in the chapter I read; of the Spirit, Christ said: "He shall guide you into all truth". Yes, well, what a word is this for fools,

ignorant people, who may often be saying we do not know the truth; we see but little of it, or little in it, sometimes; but the Spirit shall guide you, take you by the hand, and open the door of some truth and show you its wonders and its beauties and its glories and its suitableness, and you will say I never saw this before.

And lastly, for I must not go on, "I will be their God" to accept them, accept their persons, and accept their offerings, accept their prayers and their praises. O, it is great to be accepted; great to be accepted; accepted in the Beloved; accepted in respect of righteousness, in respect of holiness, in respect of your prayers, in respect of your thanksgivings, in respect of your poor services. Accepted. God accepts His people. "I will accept you" He said in Ezekiel "with your sweet savour". I know what some of you feel at times, the ill savour of your sinfulness and your sinning. God says, "I will accept you". I wont deny and contradict your confessions, but when you come with your sins, I will accept you with your sweet savour of rest. It is, in the margin, savour of rest. It is the savour of Christ's sacrifice, the savour of His precious merit. And God accepts His people and their failures in praising Him, takes away the sin of their holy things, when He accepts them in the Saviour's sweet savour; sweet smelling savour. And how long shall this last? How long shall this last? Through eternity; through eternity. Never will He leave them here, and receive them into glory. Says Christ, Where I am there shall My servant also be. Now this, as far as I know and can judge in Holy Scripture, is the sweet mercy of God in taking wretches, children of wrath even as others, wicked persons, and creating them anew in Christ Jesus, constituting them His people and accepting them in the savour of the merits of His eternal Son. May the mercy be yours and mine.

AMEN.