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EVENING SERMON IS NO. 470

(on 10/1/22)

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 1 October 1922

JEREMIAH 31 v 3

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore
with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"

The gospel character of this word is, I think, established by what the Lord, in the previous chapter, as in this also, says. He promises to raise up David their king unto them; David's Lord, Jesus Christ. He says in this chapter that which is quoted in the gospel of Matthew: Rahel weeping for her children because they were not. Also in this chapter is that new covenant, the covenant of grace, which is quoted by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And these three points, if you notice, will doubtless, in your minds, establish the truth that this is a gracious gospel word. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me" - and this is the way of His appearing - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The result of that is this: "Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee".

It is a great thing for anyone to have a past to look back upon, an appearance of God to him. As many of you as are destitute of such a past - I would say to you - one thing you must know if you are to go to heaven that you do not know now; namely, the new birth. No matter what you have, if you are destitute of the new birth you are inexpressibly poor and your state is, beyond all words, sad. Christ's word will always stand to those who are dead in sins: "Ye must be born again." But to others, even to those to whom the Lord has appeared, how wonderful, beautiful it is that He should remind them of that truth and say, I appeared to you at a certain time, in a certain way. You might not realise that it was God appearing, might not know what happened, might be ignorant of the spiritual nature of what had come to you, even the new birth, but the truth remains that when God comes to one whom He has loved eternally and appears to him in some work of grace, there is a spiritual work, there is the new birth. Mind that; do not forget that. Whenever God comes to a sinner

and appears to him in some way in which hitherto He was unknown, there is the new birth; there is imparted a spiritual nature, whence their troubles and difficulties and exercises and appetites, their convictions of sin, their mourning and their confessions and their cries for mercy arise. No life, no feeling. No life of God, no feeling of sin. No appearing of God to a person, no conviction of sin. Here we should distinguish between the workings of the natural conscience and the working of the Spirit of God in conviction. The workings of a natural conscience are very good, and any of you young people who may feel that there is a conscience in you, that is, a sort of moral working, exercising you with regard to what is right and what is wrong, to you I would say, listen to that; never browbeat conscience; never browbeat conscience. If you are tempted to falsehood and conscience says, that is wrong, listen to it. If you are tempted to turn aside from the ways in which you have been brought up by godly parents, and conscience says they, your parents, are right; this path is contrary to their walk; listen to conscience. If anything comes to tell you that the Scriptures are not given by inspiration of God and conscience says that that contradicts all I have ever known, listen to conscience; only do not rest there; God save you from resting there. The proper, natural sphere of conscience is the law and God is the object of conscience as it thus should be exercised in all men. Gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts by the working of their conscience which either accuses or excuses them. O, that all of you here knew something about that proper, natural sphere of your consciences, and God, the Object; it would be good for you. We can never over value morality except we put it in the place of the new birth and the workings of God's Holy Spirit.

But now, where the life of God is, there is a working of conscience and it is elevated, so to speak; it is on another plain; sees in another light; feels with a different life. And although the same God is the Object of it, He is seen in quite a different light and therefore the exercise of the heart is a different exercise. When God appears to a person and quickens him, he is brought to feel he is a sinner; he is brought to believe that God is just; there is something in his heart which effectually stops him as did the drawn sword stop Balaam's ass and Balaam. The man cannot, whatever his

disposition may be, whatever his temptation may be, he cannot press forward against God in conviction. But then this appearing of God has something else in it, even mercy. Said He, concerning His friend Abraham, "I called him alone and blessed him." Were you ever called? Perhaps some may say, we do not know. That is a point undecided in our minds; we wish we did know. We, if we had a world, would sometimes gladly part with it to be assured that God has called us by His grace. Well, there is One can settle the point for you. If I had wisdom and ability to set before you every good thing that you have, every true mark of grace, and the Lord were not in the word, you would have some objection. You would probably object to me, well, but there is a secret in my case that you do not know. But if the Lord should shine on you and on His work of grace, your objection would be like tow in the fire, like the crackling of thorns under the pot; it would not stand. May the Lord show you. When He appears in Christ, He appears to be full of attraction, because full of everything that the guilty person needs. Does he need justification? It is in Christ. Does he need forgiveness? It is in Christ. Does he need holiness? It is in Christ. Does he need to know, and wish to know, God to be his Father? He will only know it in Christ. The whole of that he needs is discovered to him by the Holy Spirit, discovered to him as being in Jesus Christ. God is attractive in that way. Yes, you will find that as the attractions of God fall on your spirit from time to time that you move with a certain alacrity in your spirit after Him; that, if you come across the passage at that moment that you have in the Psalms: "My soul followeth hard after Thee", you will say, that exactly describes my case. I want God and feel ready to say to all hindrances, hinder me not, for I want Him; I press after Him, to know Him for myself, to have Him in my heart, the hope of glory. At such times you can truly say that the glitter, tinsel, temptation, attractions of this world are as nothing to you, although you have, perhaps, an exceedingly worldly mind. I know this. "I have appeared of old unto thee". I have appeared as a Saviour. Men who are lost want a Saviour. Men who feel that if they had what their sins deserve it would be eternal banishment from the presence of God and the glory of His power, want a Saviour, feel their need of one who is able to save unto the uttermost, and this is a great thing in vital religion. Not some vamped up feeling in their natural minds that lasts for a moment, like a vapour, but a living spring in their hearts which, to their own

surprise sometimes, wells up in fervent desire; desire going out, as in the Psalms expressed, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation". Will less do for you? If so, you are in a sad state. O, but if the Lord appears as a Saviour you will be after Him. Now a Saviour must have certain things, qualities, if I may use the word. For instance, He must have something of power in Him. If He be not powerful of what use can He be to you? Is the Lord this blessed One in whom you perceive power? Yes, the Mighty God is our Saviour; Jesus Christ, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. But how is this power manifested? Must you go to creation and seek it there? You will find it if you seek it there, but you must see it in another manner. Must you go to providence and behold the mighty workings of God there? There you will see omnipotence, but you must see it in another manner. Often my mind goes back to the time when I saw omnipotence, naked as it appeared to me, and that was a terror; and to a time when I saw omnipotence clothed in my own nature, and that became an attraction. Power divine in the Man Christ Jesus. Power to subdue iniquity, power to take away sin. But where, in the first place, did He manifest this power: The answer is, on the cross, when, having finished the work His Father gave Him to do, He said, "It is finished", and dismissed His spirit. And if you see almighty God there, sighing human breath, freely yielding up the ghost, giving Himself as a vicarious sacrifice without spot to God, that will assure you that all you need is the application to you of that almighty work accomplished by the Son of God incarnate on the accursed tree. When the Lord appears to a sinner as crucified, is it not wonderful to him? His soul, in faith, exclaims, this is the Person I need; this is the Saviour my soul would embrace; in Him I want to be found, to lose my sins in His precious atonement and to find that I am His; that He bought me with His blood. Now when one has seen Him by faith, as expiring, and by expiring, removing sin, taking the whole of the sin away that God imputed to Him, then the cry is, now Lord make me know that that work was for me.

Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood

O, but may I not know it otherwise? No! not savingly. You must have a witness, and that witness, not your own, but His. If a man bear witness

to himself, his witness is not true, but if the Spirit be pleased to bear witness to that man's heart that Christ has died for him, that witness is true, and is relied upon. Hence, that wonderful promise of Christ becomes very attractive. "He" says the Lord Jesus of the Holy Spirit, "shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." If you see the Lord in this way, then you will say, He hath appeared unto me, and you will never forget it really. It may have taken place years ago, but it will often be fresh in your memory. You will go back to that time and with Erskine you will fully agree; he says

Dost mind the place, the spot of land
Where Jesus did thee meet
How He got thy heart and hand
Thy husband then was sweet

This is that that will make you, to your own sense, true Christians, for the name of Christ will be named upon you. He is a true Christian who has the life of Christ in him, but he may not know it at that time. But later, when the witness of the Spirit is in him, he says, now I know; I know in whom I have believed; I know Him for I have seen Him, and he answers to that in the Galatians where Paul says to them, Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth among you crucified. What an amazing thing it is so to know the Lord Jesus. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me in the gospel. Good news, good news for one whose sins make him fear. Good news for one whose mortality is pressed on his heart; news that there is a home in eternity; that he is to be God's guest, to be for ever where the Lord is. O, but how much there may be between. Yes, and good news for all the in between times, difficulties, dangers, sorrows, griefs, because the Lord says, I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee. You were just now singing beautiful things

A fulness resides in Jesus our Head
And ever abides to answer our need

Therefore, you need not fear. The word of God is: "Fear not, I will help thee". God has pledged this fulness; how can you die of want? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And the appearance of

God is very, very wonderful. The Holy Spirit has appeared to people. The Holy Spirit; there is not much mention made of Him today, but who can be saved without Him? I say to you again, what I have often said, it would be as easy for you to go to heaven without Jesus Christ as it would be to go there without the Holy Spirit. But is He known? Yes. Christ said that the world knows Him not, but to His disciples He said, "Ye know Him". And how? For He shall dwell with you and be in you. This is the knowledge that is to be had of the Holy Spirit, and I can appeal to the experience of the Lord's people with respect to this. Do you never feel a wonderful change from a cold, hard state, to a state of crying mightily to God? A change in your thoughts about Him and about yourself? A change in your esteem of Jesus Christ whom you have, for a time, neglected? and the Holy Spirit comes and again moves. As He moved in Samson betimes, so He moves betimes in the people of God with respect to spiritual things. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me" in His Word; this blessed, precious Book. In His Word; a word of peace, a word of promise, a word of goodness, a word that made you certain that you would not fail because the Lord would not fail you, a word that told you that His goodness endureth continually, that you cannot wear it out, a word that said to you, I have made with thee an everlasting covenant; I am your God; you are My son. In the Word the Lord appears to His people. He appears to them at times in providence. Why, there are some providences which, to the Lord's people to whom they come are absolutely distinct as His gracious work, as His immediate work, and they can say, now this is God's work; this is an answer to prayer; this meets my case. Now these people to whom this is said were in a bad case;- if, for a moment, one may refer to Israel - the people were in captivity. They had disobeyed, they had walked contrary to, God. They were froward and they came to know that He was walking contrary to them and showing Himself froward to them. Take this in a spiritual way. Have I some before me of whom it is quite true that God has appeared of old to them, but now they are far off? I am disposed to say that I think that, for the most part, the Church of Christ is in captivity today; that the best saints are in a low condition; that they do not get those striking appearances of God they used to have; that they are not favoured as they formerly were; that the hand of the Lord is not on them as it used to be; that they do not hear His voice as they used to hear it. They cannot give up the past; neither Scripture, nor the

Spirit, nor the conscience will allow them to give up the past, but the present is different. Yet it comes out; it is true therefore that "with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". He draws out, He continues, His lovingkindness; as you have it in one Psalm: "O, continue Thy lovingkindness", and the reading is "draw out Thy lovingkindness". To what length does the lovingkindness of God go out to His people?

Let us look a little at this drawing. "Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". There are two terms in it. There is a place whence; there is a place whither. Whence are you drawn? O, you will say, I am drawn from a dark state sometimes. I am drawn from carnality of mind which often, alas, has prevailed in me and provoked the Lord. I am drawn to the throne of God's heavenly grace. And where better can you be? This side eternity, what better place is there? Where are you more healthy than when on your knees? Where is faith more vigorous than when at the throne of grace? Where is hope brighter: where is love warmer? than at the throne of grace. All is there that we want. Says the apostle, "Come boldly to the throne of grace". And God draws His people to that blessed seat where Jesus is, where the Father is, where the Holy Spirit is, and it is a grand thing in religion to have the Trinity before you - the older I get, I trust I may truly say, the more I regard the Trinity, and desire to feel the Three-One God as my own - and to see this blessed God; the Father, in His eternal love in choosing you unto eternal life; the Son, in His own eternal love freely, vicariously, giving Himself for you; and the Spirit in His own eternal love, in His great office in the Covenant, coming and quickening and teaching and guiding and blessing you. Now it is a loving thing for God to do to draw a sinner to His heavenly throne. Probably some of you find it difficult sometimes to pray. How can it be difficult, one may say, for a person to pray? Why, when he feels sin, when the wickedness of his nature is felt by him, when his inconsistencies stand before him. I could not express to you the difficulty I find at times to pray, the difficulty of calling upon the Name of God because a long life, so misspent, a long ministry so unprofitable, a wicked heart so prevailing, all standing before me. I do sympathise with Hart's word. "Had I not", said he, addressing the Lord Jesus,

Had I not Thy blood to plead
Each sight would sink me to despair

But God draws. "I drew thee with the cords of love, with the bands of a Man." The cords of love, everlasting love; two cords. The three-fold cord of God's love. The bands of a Man; the bands of Christ's sacred humanity, so suitable to us. These, cast around a hesitating sinner, these drawing him in their own invincible, their own sweet power, will effectually bring him to the throne of God's heavenly grace. So he finds that he not only must pray, but that he can pray. Not only that he can pray, but that he loves to pray. Yea, and more, that God is near to him, opening His patient ear to him, and bowing down to listen to his complaints, and his petitions. "I have drawn thee". Israel, to refer to that nation, was drawn out of Egypt into the wilderness, and you will be drawn after God. When, in His great kindness, He gives you this powerful influence, you will be sure to go after Him. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." So you will find God will draw you into trouble in His providence, but it will always be that you may go to a city of habitation. Never, if you can help, never judge of God's heart by some works of His hand. If you judge of God's end by some particular providence, then you misjudge God. Was not Jacob foolish when he said: "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God", and was not he silenced when the Lord said to him: "Hast thou not known? has thou not heard? that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense

"I drew thee" You wont go after Him unless He draws you, such is the

inveterate enmity of our hearts against Him, and such is our foolishness. But, remembering His covenant, He draws with lovingkindness. It will one day be written across your troubles - "lovingkindness". One day you will say, how good the Lord was to trouble me there. How kind of Him it was to thwart me there. How wonderfully merciful it was of Him not to let me have my own way there. "I drew thee". With lovingkindness drew thee to My righteousness. Now I believe that the older we get, the more we shall need this blessed righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for this great and painful reason, that "There is none that doeth good and sinneth not", and that the constant failures and fallings, of which we are guilty, will bring us to realise that there is, there can be, no proper covering for us but that blessed one which the Lord has provided, and that we shall say more and more, experimentally, more and more, appreciatingly, - "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength". In Him, and in Him alone, is that covering. "This is the Name wherewith He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness". And God will draw you to that. You will wrap that around you at times by faith, and say, though unspeakably wicked, in the Lord have I perfect justification. Look for this, dear friends, in Christ; perfect justification. Nowhere else is it to be had. I have drawn thee to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. This meets a constant need in us. Why a constant need? Because of constant defilement. Now no Christian lives in sin; no Christian lives habitually and willingly in sin; but in every Christian sin lives. In every child of God sin has a power and frequently defiles. Therefore, that is to be always had recourse to; a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, causes of separation. I would not like that man's religion who gets no sense of this, who is not conscious of causes of separation between him and his God. O, but what a mercy that, when there is a sense of separation, that comes to pass in the experience, sooner or later; a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. The blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctified him, qualified him again for the service of God, and the blood of Christ sprinkled from time to time sanctifies the conscience, qualifies the sinner to again enter into the sweet, blessed, blissful, bliss-giving presence of God. I have drawn thee with lovingkindness into a lively hope. "We are saved by hope". "If, in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But we have a hope

beyond. Some of you younger people may not be much able to appreciate this; you may be exercised about your present things and have many years of life before you, and so your exercises are more as to such matters. But when you get old and grey-headed, if you live till then, you will find this - now the end is approaching, mortality is withering, powers failing - a little of the experience approaching you that is in the Ecclesiastes, the last chapter, and you will say, now I do find my heart more set on the end than anything else. And, says the Lord, I will come again; I will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, you, My servant, shall be. That is a prospect; that, a ground, and reason, and object of hope. The end; it is coming. And I have drawn thee into this hope said the Lord. He drew hope in the hearts of His captives in Babylon telling them that He knew what He had in His thoughts concerning them to give an expected end and He sets before His people who are captives here in their mortal state, that blessed end which He has designed for them in eternity, even to be where He is and to be for ever with Him. What a prospect. Why, sometimes, by moments, it lives in me nowadays, and I have felt a great difficulty in repressing the wish to be gone quickly. Ah, if ever you get into your soul a sense of union with Christ and a prospect of eternity, a blissful eternity, with Him, you wont want to live to be very old, except this you will feel: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." I have appeared of old unto thee, I have drawn thee with lovingkindness, and therefore, although now in a captive state, "I will build thee and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry".(Jeremiah 31 v 4). This is a prospect then; the Lord give it you who fear Him and grant that you may be able to go back, by His merciful teaching, to those days when He appeared to you, and look forward to this blessed promise to build you again.

AMEN.