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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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JOB 23 V 13 AND 14

"But He is of one mind and who can turn Him? and
what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For
He performeth the thing that is appointed for
me: and many such things are with Him"

This morning the subject of divine sovereignty occupied us, that profound and awful perfection of Jehovah. It was for Him to say that there should be creation. There was no necessity in Him that He should create a creature, no necessity that He should have one to make Him happy; eternally sufficient in Himself. He sovereignly decreed to create the universe, angels and men, and having performed that purpose, then comes His holy providence assigning to each person his and her position. Were this realised by us, it would give a meaning, a point, to the word which we may often quote, but not feel much, if anything - "Hath not the Potter power over the clay". Very solemn to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour. And, did we feel that by the Holy Ghost, there would be a great and grave and constant concern in our hearts to be vessels unto honour. All vessels shall be full. No vessel shall be empty. Then, says a child of God, "O that I may be filled with mercy, that I may have Christ in my heart the hope of glory.

"One mind" One Jehovah working all things according to the good pleasure of His will, whose will none can effectually resist, or properly say unto Him "What doest Thou?" Do you realise this awfulness, this gloriousness in Jehovah? Do you feel in your own cases that you are just a creature in the hands of the Creator, and just a sinner to be dealt with according to the good pleasure of His will? 'Tis solemn to be a creature; very solemn to be responsible to Jehovah, to be accountable to the Judge, responsible to the Creator for obedience to the law under which He has made us, and accountable for the life we live as fallen men and women. We are sovereignly appointed to the good position, all full of advantages, privileges,

with power adequate to the duty laid upon us, but we lost it all and became bankrupt, and now we are at the disposal of this great, this offended Majesty. What does He owe to you? What does He owe to me? He owes us just this, what He owes to Himself, to vindicate His character which means He owes death to us, for that is what He threatened in the event of sin entering. May the Lord impress upon our hearts a due sense of this sovereignty of God.

The second thing in the text to notice is "What His soul desireth even that He doeth".

What does His soul desire respecting the Church? He desires this - to have His Church for His dwelling. "Here will I dwell for I have desired it". And Paul, writing by the Holy Ghost to the Ephesians, says that the saints are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." That brings before us a very serious, solemn consideration, this namely - is that what God is doing with us? Is the Holy Spirit taking you one by one? Has He not only dug you out of the pit, but is He taking you as living stones to the Living Stone to build you up, a habitation for Himself. A question not to be baulked, but looked at by the grace of the Spirit, very seriously. The operations of the Spirit will be known from time to time to the favoured subjects of them in bringing one by one. Bringing you one day away from some vanity, sin, waywardness, pride. Emptying you of all these things; making you a living soul in experience, and laying you on the living Person, or foundation, of Jesus Christ. And this is put personally as an experience in the Scripture - "Christ in you"; "I in them"; "Christ in you the hope of glory". In you as your life, as your righteousness, as your wisdom, as your redemption, as your sanctification. "Christ in you". What a wonder that this should be God's desire. Did you ever enter into it, that the holy, the eternally pure God should desire to have you, a sinner, that He might dwell in you, that you should be more to Him than heaven, which is His throne, than earth, which is His footstool. "With him will I dwell", says God. Think then of this. Have you any evidence that God really desires you and that, desiring you for a habitation, He will perform and do that which is His desire. Even that which He desires will He do. This, I may observe, makes profession of religion a very serious thing. Men may take it up lightly who do not realise what this

purpose of God is. But when God deals with a man He tells him that he is just, by the fall, in a pit and needs to be dug out; that he is a piece of a rock in a rock, and needs to be cut out, and that when God will dig a sinner out of the pit and hew him out of the rock, it is for a divine purpose, a glorious purpose, even that, that person so dealt with, brought into such trouble by that operation, brought into such concern by a sense of who God is, what He is, of what the sinner is in himself, shall be favoured to have this thing done in him - even God dwelling in Him. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you" Professor, do you know this? Has God come to you, taken possession, made you, according to the Psalm, "willing in the day of His power", given you grace to say - "Here's my heart, Lord, wilt Thou come into it?" Have you felt you could say - "Unworthy dwelling, glorious guest". This is His desire. This becomes the desire of every new-born person. "What His soul desireth even that He doeth".

This affects the Church, the visible Church. John saw the Son of Man walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. This is a place He desires. This is to Him more than heaven and earth. Here is His delight. This, rightly felt, will affect us as a little Church. Does He come? Does He walk in the midst of us? If He does He accomplishes two things. First He speaks to us of the faults, the wrong things He perceives to be in us, and that is very solemn. If you hold anything wrong, if you walk in any wrong way, this wondrous Person will tell you of them. You will be sure to have your faults pointed out. One good man, James Bourne, in a letter says this - "I find much of God's dealing with me to be finding fault with me". "O" one may say "what a gloomy thing". But if you have faults, is it not a mercy to have them pointed out to you? Is it not kind of the Lord Jesus to tell you where you are wrong and give you space and grace to repent? Mercifully, I know something of that kind work of the Lord Jesus.

The second thing is this, that what is good in you He tells you of. Have you patience waiting for Him? Have you love for Him and for His truth? Have you kept your garments clean and white, your profession unspotted, by His grace? He will be sure to commend you. So good, so faithful, so merciful and kind is He that you will never

have a good thing which He will not acknowledge. God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith and of love and of patience. "What His soul desireth even that He doeth" - to dwell among His people. "This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell for I have desired it". See if this is so. Look into your experience and see if you have any proof of God dwelling in you. If you have not, if you never have, woe be to you.

And the following verse is - "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me and many such things are with Him." What did He perform for Job? He gave him first prosperity, made him the greatest man of the east. His possessions are counted in the first chapter of this Book. Do ascribe any good that you have in providence to God. O never, never do sacrifice to your own net and drag and say by this your meat is made plenteous and fat. Whatever you have in providence, God gives, whatever comfort in your position, whatever ease in your life, whatever you possess you have, you possess, from God. He performs it. You may say, as carnal men always do say, you will "go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain", whereas "ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that" O says James "What is your life? It is even a vapour" So do not forget, O people of God, to ascribe to God's performing, whatever you have in this world.

The next thing God provided and performed in the case of Job was adversity that came. Job might have been making his nest, although God testifies of him that he was a perfect man and an upright one, one that eschewed evil and feared God. But for discipline and for His glory, God was pleased to send affliction, and Job saw God in this. Did you ever see God and no-one else in your trouble? The Amalekites, the Sabeans, the wind and the fire, Job saw none of them. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord." Naturally, when we get into trouble, it is this that caused it; it is that that brought it to pass. And if there be a creature in the circumstances doing evil, or what is not right to us, then we see the creature, the second means or cause. And this brings trouble. Job was favoured in the beginning of his affliction to say - "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord". How humble was Job, being humbled by grace, and therefore he was patient

till his misunderstanding friends provoked him. And when the second affliction came, namely he was smitten and covered with sore boils, then he had another trouble. His ungracious wife bade him curse God and die. God performed it. God performs trouble, the thing that He has appointed for you, the affliction in your persons, in your families, in your business, the temptations of Satan. All these have an origin, they have a natural origin, but behind that there is the purpose of God, the tremendous sovereignty of God. He may have purposed a season of sore temptation to some of you, when the evils of your nature assert themselves; when the devil comes as an angel of light, or as a roaring lion, either to deceive you or to devour you. He does not come, without God. He does not come, without God. Divine permission is in the matter, and God performs in you the thing that He has appointed. Many such things are with Him, many. The trial of faith is a precious thing, "more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire". And you will find in the issue what Job found - "The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy". The end is in view, not to yourself for a time, but always before God, the end. What was the end of God with Job? The end of that dispensation was to bless him. Who can doubt that Job, many and many a time after his deliverance blessed God for the trouble. And I am sure those of you who have had particular troubles and dispensations of God, when you reckon up your mercies, you will reckon up your troubles among them. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes". (Psalm 119 v 71) "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (Psalm 119 v 67). He performeth that.

"Many such things are with Him". This means, to you who fear His Name, many afflictions. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all". No devil can destroy, though he walks about seeking whom he may devour. He performeth, He works. He works by means. He works sometimes by the ministry good, sending needed reproofs, rebukes. By providence, straitening a person who has been walking at large; emptying a bag, putting holes into a bag into which the wages have been put, and out they go. O how little do some of us observe God in His dealings with us. This comes, this earthly reason we find and rest in it. God says, No, this is not to be your way, I am the end. There is an end to all the affliction. But mark this, it is true as the Scripture declares, the

day of adversity is set against the day of prosperity. You cannot add that which is lacking. It is God that performeth all things and many such things. You are not to reckon upon an easy path. O but then, how are we to live? This way - "In the world ye shall have tribulation but in Me ye shall have peace". You shall die many a death but you shall live everlastingly. "Because I live ye shall live also". Ah, we have to learn many things in the dealings of God with us. Our ignorance; how little of Him is understood. Our weakness; how can we hold on? We need Him to keep our feet according as it is written "He keepeth the feet of His saints; none of their steps shall slide." Our liability to fall, our readiness to fall into sin, to yield to the tempter. We have to learn these things by painful dispensations. It is not just one immediate light shining on a person, teaching him in a moment all the things he needs to be taught, but little by little, here a little and there a little, so that we come to this in our experience, we have been taught by adversity; we have been taught by affliction; we have been brought to a full Saviour by many an emptying dispensation. Many such things are with Him.

And the end of it is this, that we must be nothing, God everything. A most distasteful truth to fallen man. One of the greatest sins of fallen nature is independence, proud independence. Not a little is needed to bring down the heart. "He brought down their heart with labour". Pride is one of the abominations before God. Pride means independence. Pride cannot brook any contradiction. Pride says - I will do this: I wont do that. Pride leads to rebellion. Pride makes men say - what have I done that I should have this trouble? Pride puffs a man up. Pride has made many a Lucifer and perhaps some in this chapel have, even while hearing, been puffed up with pride. Yea, the pulpit is a place for pride too. No place secure, no heart guarded well against this, except it be by the merciful operations of the Holy Ghost. So God performs many things. He says - you must come down. Have you realised anything of that word - If any man will be My disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. If he love father or mother, brother or sister, wife, house or land more than Me, he is not worthy of Me; cannot be My disciple. So God sees this dispensation and that affliction to be necessary in order to bring us down, even to the bottom.

Now what do we read of the end of God with regard to Job in the dispensation of God as recorded in this Book? The end of the Lord shows Him to be very pitiful and of tender mercy. The end of the Lord there means just this, the end of that particular dealing of God with him. We are not told exactly how long it continued, but it was a long time, and all the while when Job was irritated by his friends, when he was greatly provoked, suffering in his person, from the sole of the foot to the crown of his head covered with sore boils, and brought into the depths of poverty, there was one end that God had in view, and that was the good of Job's soul and the glory of the grace of God in him. And now the Lord dealt very pitifully with him. Look for the end dear afflicted saints, look for the end. No affliction is an end in itself. Look for the end of God in sending it. Affliction is a means, a flail, a threshing machine to scatter the chaff and leave the wheat in God's floor. Affliction is a rod which is to be heard - "Hear the rod and who has appointed it". Affliction is to make room for God in us. It is sent to fetch back a wandering sheep. It is sent to say God cares too much for you to let you destroy yourself. God looks on you and takes care of you. He has left you to wander so far and now He has sent this to bring you back. You have become prayerless; He will have you pray. You have become hard; He will use His word either as a fire to dissolve, or a hammer to break. You have become indifferent to His glory; He sends His Spirit to discover and purge away the dross of that indifference and to make Himself the first to you. And all these things, remember, He performs to accomplish His great end. He has an end.

One word about the great end of all, that is to bring His people to Himself. Where I am there shall ye be also. He makes His people "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light". What is your aim? "O" says afflicted nature, "to get out of affliction anyhow". That wont do for a child of God. God makes this his end - "Teach me." It is a constant cry of a child of God, at least I can say that at times it is my constant cry - "Teach me." "I am ignorant, teach me. Teach me what? To submit to Thee, to submit to Thy divine will, to Thy holy providence. To put my mouth in the dust, to confess my sins, to be willing to part with ~~with~~ them. What is God's end? To bring a sinner to Himself, and the whole Church, redeemed, to present her spotless and without blame before Him in

love. Does your desire get as high as that, to reach heaven? To be absent from the body and present with the Lord. The Lord grant it may be so. "He is of one mind and who can turn Him, and what His soul desireth that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me and many such things are with Him."

May the Holy Ghost put this truth of divine sovereignty into our hearts that we may be willing to be pieces of clay in the hands of the divine Potter, that we may have in our hearts this longing, this panting, to be filled as vessels of mercy and the Lord be glorified in us.

AMEN.