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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 6 October, 1929

JOB 23 v 3 and 4

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I
might come even to His seat! I would order
my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with
arguments"

Job had two troubles, first the unparalleled mental sufferings inflicted on him without cause, as God said, said to the enemy, the devil, thou hast moved Me against him without a cause. He is a perfect man and upright, he fears God and eschews evil. Divine sovereignty is here; divine purposes of mercy are here, concealed, but present. All possessions, the best of all, his health, Job was bereaved of, and in the third chapter he utters those vehement words of complaint and curses the day of his birth. And when he had finished there came a second trouble to him, the false accusations of misunderstanding, though kindly intended, friends. They entirely misunderstood him because they misunderstood God. You will never understand things rightly in providence unless you have some understanding of God. These three friends came to Job to sympathise with him and as soon as Job had ended his first speech they opened their mouths one by one; accused Job of hypocrisy, not that they could have proved, but that they misunderstood the providence and the purposes and the wisdom of God, so they constantly accused him, irritated him. He could bend to God, but bend before these men, was more than he could do and so one may say that there was a continual altercation between Job and these three men. They were ceaseless in their accusations of hypocrisy and all of them were based upon their conception of what God does. See my friends, if you are enabled in your judgments of things, to found judgments on knowledge of God. Many a child of God has been misunderstood and falsely charged by men because the chargers, the accusers, have not known God. In this chapter Job begins an answer to Eliphaz who appears to have been the chief speaker of the three friends. In the chapter preceding this 23rd Eliphaz continues the strain commenced by him and continued by

his good friends, accusing Job, trying, as doubtless he thought, to justify God. This may be a key to what the Lord said to the three men when he delivered Job and turned his captivity. He said to them "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath". God had taken notice of their ignorance of Himself, and so He said to them you have not said the thing that is right of Me. A very serious thing for God to have to say that to any person. Mind what you say of God. The modernist tells us what God ought to be, what He ought to do, what is not consistent with the divine Being. Leave him, dear friends, leave him in the hands of God. One day he will be utterly confounded, either by gracious intentions and teachings of the Spirit, or in terrible and eternal judgment and punishment. Leave him, bend the knee, as you are enabled, seek to know God and to judge of things by Himself, His wisdom, His purity, His holiness, His justice, His goodness. He can do nothing wrong. His way is perfect, His work is perfect. Just and right is He. Whatever men say, whatever we say, whatever we may think, whatever we may do, all references to God will be judged by God and if they are right then the wondrous commendation that Job got we shall have. Job, with all his petulance and his altercations with these misunderstanding friends, got that wondrous testimony. He hath spoken, saith God, of Me, the thing that is right.

And now he opens, as it were, his answer by first of all an appeal, a groan as if, turning to Eliphaz and the others, he should say, you do not understand God, therefore you misunderstand my case. I have no appeal to make to you, I appeal, from you and your judgment, to God, yet I do not know where to find Him. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him" Oh that I could get an audience with Him. Can you adopt this language? Can you say, passing Sabians, Chaldeans, robbers, passing by fire, and wind, all of whom and of which destroyed Job's substance, can you appeal from all to Him and say, Lord I want to find Thyself. Everything is explained sooner or later when God comes to a sinner and brings the sinner to Himself. Leave your matters if you can with Him. Seek Himself. All else will come right ; all is right that seems most wrong. With Him confusion brings forth peace. By Him our order is confused. He is God. I wish we had given to us more and more impressions true, though very inadequate of course, true impressions of the majesty of God. But who may approach

Him? He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto. He said to Moses, "No man can see My face and live" That is, no creature can see My immediate Being. There must be a medium and this tells us of the Mediator. There is one God; there is one God. How many in this congregation could rise in spirit now and say as in the sight of God, I believe in God, one God. It is not profession, it is not religion, it is not notion. It is just a living, a God given, faith in the heart that gives to the divine Being a substance in the heart. " Faith is the substance of things hoped for" It gives an evidence not seen. If you were to appeal to an infidel, he has no common ground to stand on and listen to your appeal and appreciate it when you appeal to this, there is one God. And if you appeal to him on the ground of your experience he says, I know nothing about it. You have to stand alone here. I believe in God and to Him I would come. O that I knew how to get to Him, where to find Him. Now let me endeavour by the Lord's help to show you how you may reach Him. Then, in what condition you may come to Him, and then the confidence that will be in your heart that He will pay a regard to you and not despise your prayer.

How may a sinner - (O that we never lost sight of sin in ourselves, sin done by us) - a sinner approach God? "O that I knew where I might find Him" To Moses He said, Raise a tabernacle for Me that I may dwell there. Make an Ark. Cover it - having in it the law - cover it with a Mercy Seat. Make cherubims that they may cover it, and there will I meet with you. Now this is a beautiful and striking type of Christ and Christ says of Himself, that the Father will draw sinners to Him. "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him." And again, "I", said Christ, "if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me". And the Apostle Paul by the Holy Ghost in the Hebrews says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," and I have often, as you know, drawn your attention to that passage in Scripture where we are told that "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not made manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do". But seeing, he said, seeing this, as well as that, that we have such a

High Priest as can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. And again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told this. "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; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near" "O that I knew where I might find Him." Sinner, if the Holy Spirit points out this Redeemer to you, you, with all your sins, all your native disability and inability will find your soul moving after Him, coming to Him. The invincible attractions of the Lord Jesus will ever bring sinners to Him. They see Him by faith; they see that He has everything that they can need. Righteousness to justify them, blood to cleanse them from all sin, wisdom to guide them in the way of peace, power to protect them against themselves, and against the devil, and against all evil. And, seeing this by faith, the people of God find an attraction in Him that is invincible, which means that there is no objection that can stand before all that the Lord Jesus Christ is. What a wonder that a sinner, as such, should be shown how that even he, with all that he has of wrong, may enter into the holiest. One of the most solemn exercises that the human mind is capable of being engaged in is prayer, approaching the Almighty. It is no little thing to pray. It is no easy thing to pray. It is not a natural exercise now. To Adam, unfallen, what a delight it must have been to walk and talk with God who, accustomed, as we may believe, walked in the cool of the day in that garden. The fall changed everything; it turned a man into an enemy of God. It changed his affections into enmity itself. It alienated him from the life of God and this is the state of every man in the world by nature. The Apostle says we are children of wrath even as others, that is, all men. Now for one of this race to be chosen of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and taught his need of a Saviour, then for that person, as a sinner, to come to this great God; to my own mind, and in my own experience, prayer is the most solemn exercise that one has ever engaged in. You are coming to God, coming to the Almighty, coming to infinite purity, infinite justice, infinite awfulness, infinite goodness. But all is in the Lord Jesus. He is not less glorious in all divine perfections than His eternal Father, but all that is clothed; most mercifully, miraculously,

blessedly clothed, in our own nature, so that He says "My terror shall not make thee afraid". Elihu, a type of Him, speaking to Job, said that later on in the Book. "My terror shall not make thee afraid." "I am according to thy wish in God's stead". "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus". Come then, trembling sinner. O but I dare not. But think of what the Lord says, and may He teach you to believe it. I, He said, inhabit eternity, but I will dwell with him that is of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at My word. It is coming by the vicarious death of the Saviour. It is coming to Him who is the righteousness of God and is the righteousness of a sinner who believes in Him. It is coming to Him who promises rest to the weary, who gives life to the dead. "O that I knew where I might find Him." Job was afflicted but he believed there was a remedy in God for his affliction. He was poor but he believed there were riches in God for him. He was weak but he believed the power of God could help him, so he wanted to come to God. How many of us want to come to God? Think of it. How many here want, really desire, to come to God, believing that He possesses all goodness and that goodness is nowhere else to be found. This coming is not a local business, neither is it necessarily vocal. Job said, even today, in this time of my affliction, and with these foolish, unwise friends of mine, I am much afflicted, and my stroke can never be adequately expressed by my groaning. O that I could come to where I should have relief. You will find no real, no abiding relief and rest in your cases but in God. It is the divine intention with respect to the church that it should be so. "This is not your rest". Adam, fallen, was not permitted to continue in Eden defiled. Defiled Eden can be no home for the sinner and the world is no home for a sinner, but God is. The Psalmist speaks of Him as a habitation, a house of defence to save him.

"That I might come even to His seat". How should I know if I found Him? Well sinner, how do you know when the sun shines? You need not one to tell you. You need no argument to prove to you that the sun shines and when you get to God you will have that evidence, that all powerful evidence in your conscience, in your spirit, that will convince you beyond all doubt for the time being that you have found Him. He smiles on sinners and His smile makes a summer. His smile conveys happiness. He speaks to sinners; He speaks friendly to sinners; He speaks comfortably to their hearts. He says so. He

allures His people into a wilderness and there He speaks comfortably to them. I will speak comfortably to her heart. And the comfortable things He says are in the gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ. And the gospel of Christ speaks peace to troubled souls, justification to guilty persons, happiness to miserable sinners. Find Him? And He says, seek Me while ye may find Me; call upon Me while I am near. And what things soever were written in this Book were written for our learning to this end, that we might know that there is a God who is findable, who is knowable. It is a grand thing to know that God is findable and knowable. It may not seem much to some of you, but it is a great deal. I well remember when it dawned on me that God was findable - it made me seek Him; that God was knowable - it made me want to know Him. But I am ignorant. Well, that does not interfere with this, Christ is the wisdom of God. If a man thinks he knows something, the Apostle Paul says, he knows nothing. That is, if a man thinks he has attained to this and that and he is quite capable of forming a judgment of God, and of man, such a man knows nothing. But to the sinner who says - I am a sinner, I feel I am a sinner, I am ignorant and am afraid of stumbling because I am ignorant; I am weak and am afraid of being overcome by my sins and Satan - to such a sinner, O to such a sinner, the Lord says: "Come unto Me; come unto Me."

"That I might come even to His seat". There is an awful distance of guilt between a Holy God and sinful men and if you are taught of God, you believe that. I know many of you believe it. How then may such a person come to God's seat? Enquire first what His seat is. It is a Mercy Seat and to come to His Mercy Seat is to come by faith to the Lord Jesus and to come by faith to the Lord Jesus is to find the seat of God. There He is. He says I will meet with thee there. Build an Ark, cover it with the Mercy Seat, and I will meet with thee there. Where I put My Name, there I will be, and I will be there to heal thee. So He said to Israel of old and in gospel language it is just that, I will meet a sinner, I will bless a sinner, I will justify a sinner, I will help and heal a sinner, and the sinner says, "Heal me O Lord for I have sinned". Well, and what would Job do when he found God. O he tells us. "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments". These, my friends, accuse me falsely, because they do not understand Thy majesty, Thy dealings. "I would", if I were

favoured to find Thee, "order my cause before Thee", would appeal from them to Thyself, would speak about my case to Thee, and that meets the case of sinners. When they find God in Christ they order their causes before Him and it is said in the Psalms: "I know that the Lord will maintain the right of the poor and the cause of the needy". What is the cause of the needy, and what is it for God to maintain that cause and the right of that sinner? The cause is this. The sinner has an immortal soul and he knows that he lies under the law which means that, being a breaker of the law, he lies under the curse of the law. It means that he is a sinner daily, that "there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not". It means that he cannot alter the bad state and case he is in. That is the cause. What is it to order it? It is to confess it. It is to have no excuse. The Adamic spirit that moved Adam to excuse himself for eating the forbidden fruit by saying: "The woman Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me and I did eat", that excuse is taken out of the heart, as well as the mouth, of the sinner, and he says: "Woe is me". "Woe is me for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips". Now he comes to order his cause before the holy God, the omniscient God, and all he can say is: "I have sinned". And the conclusion he is driven to by unbelief and the devil is: "I shall die". But he comes to this Mercy Seat; O what a thing! Mercy Seat. Mercy rejoicing against judgment. Mercy and truth embracing each other, righteousness and peace kissing each other at this blessed Mercy Seat. (Psalm 85 v 10). Not a finger lifted up against the sinner, not a whisper of justice objecting to the approach of this sinner, but every perfection of Deity harmonised in the Lord Jesus on the cross. Now this sinner comes to confess his sins, to order his cause. If you go with excuses, you won't be accepted. If you go with confessions, you will be accepted. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And though Job judged God to be severe in His solemn dealing in providence with him, and now he might say: Lord it is hard for me to have lost everything that I had and, above all other losses, to have lost my health, the chief thing that he would say, and did say, when the Lord came and spoke to him was: "I have sinned". "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." I believe that no child of God can ever adequately express the welcome that he receives at times at the throne of God's heavenly grace, the

beams of mercy as they fall on his spirit, the touches of the Holy Spirit of grace, the intercession of the Holy Spirit with groanings which cannot be uttered as the Apostle Paul speaks; the sense of being helped in prayer, the enlargement of desire, the liberty of the Spirit, the opening of the heart and of the mouth of faith. No one, I say, blessed with that experience, can ever properly, adequately, express it. There is no word big enough, full enough, to express what kindness the sinner receives, what goodness God bestows on him. Come sinner, order your cause, speak to this good God. "Open thy mouth wide". He says: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden". These kind words, dropped from the lip of Truth, do express the heart of God to sinners and they tell sinners that there is nothing too bad for the Lord to undertake and no sin too great for Him to forgive. "All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Son of Man shall be forgiven. (Matthew 12 v 31)

But this sinner would be very shy, would he not? He would be very afraid to speak if he got there. So, says nature, yea and so, says a convicted conscience with legality working, but faith says: "I would fill my mouth with arguments". I would argue in my own case. I would argue in my own case and I would present arguments to God that He would have to listen to, that He could not reject, against which He could have nothing to say. That seems too bold, does it not? yet it is true. Let us look at the arguments, gather them all up into one, and that one is this - the death of Christ. Christ, by death, destroyed death; by death removed sin; by death fulfilled the law; by death magnified the law and made it honourable. By death He made a new and living way and opened it, opened it wide for His poor, trembling people. But look at the arguments in one or two particulars. The first is this - the argument of Christ's Person. We have this argument in the hymn book; this is it

'Tis He instead of me is seen
When I approach to God

and I would humbly, reverently, say that there is nothing in Deity, nothing in the claim of God on man, nothing in infinite purity, infinite justice, nothing in divine threatenings that God will ever

raise up against a sinner who comes with the argument that Christ's Person affords to faith. O sinner, if you have got faith in the Lord Jesus, and can dare to mention Him in prayer, you mention that that God, His eternal Father, cannot dispute, will never speak against, never disregard, and the Lord Jesus names this argument Himself. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name". If you shall ask for forgiveness, for justification, for wisdom; ask for deliverance out of some trouble; ask that Satan and sin may not overcome and ruin you for ever; "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it" Surely if faith opens her mouth under the instruction of the Holy Ghost, this will be the first argument of all. And the second argument will be His Priesthood. We have such an High Priest as can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The priest was always in between God and men. The whole of the priesthood of Levi was just that, always between men, for whom he offered, and God, to whom he offered sacrifices. A great argument this. Said the Lord to Moses, and Israel through him, "When I see the blood I will pass by you". The destroying angel shall not enter into your houses to destroy you. And when the infinite merit of Christ, offered by the Priest, the great High Priest, God sees, there is an argument. Oh in Him is merit, in Him is Priesthood. The blessed Priesthood of the Lord Jesus, the mediation of Christ will bring you honourably to your grave. Sinner, if by faith you can lay hold of that, as Paul speaks to Timothy: "Lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called", that will do. Death and hell, and devil and sin indwelling and all enemies and all difficulties and all adverse providences will not suffice to hurt you. For the mediation of the Saviour; argue it. Oh if conscience accuses you, you will never be able to say, I am not guilty, but, while saying I am guilty, mention the mediation of the Lord Jesus.

Argue on the ground of mercy.

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I crave,
This is the total sum

Fill your mouth with it; God delights in mercy. Mercy He loves, and mercy is so honourable, mercy is so honourable. Justice is always by the side of mercy, so that there is no opposition offered to a sinner

when he comes pleading for mercy in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Argue this, the love of God. Ask Him to come for love's sake. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us". The love of God, great love; according to the love of the Lord to Israel. That is a great argument. "In this was manifested the love of God because that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." Herein is the love of God manifested toward us, in that He sent His only begotten Son to die. Love is a wonderful thing. The love of God moved Him to send His Son. The love of the Son moved Him to come and to die and the love of the Spirit moves Him to come into a sinner's heart. Ask for love; argue on the ground of love. God does not accept any good from His people in themselves, for He knows they have none, but He will remember His Son, and does remember Him and He says, ask for love's sake. They say, so said God by Jeremiah, They say, if a man put away his wife and she be married to another, shall he return unto her? Shall not that land be greatly polluted in which such practices are held? O, says God, by Jeremiah, in that passage, just preach this, according to the love of the Lord. What does He say: Return unto Me. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me" (Jeremiah 3) So, if you can argue on the ground of love, you fill your mouth with that which God will, God must, regard.

Another argument is this, the omnipotence of God. No, says a sinner, objecting to himself and against his case: No, not omnipotence. Yes, I shall maintain my ground. Argue on the ground of omnipotence. Where is omnipotence? Listen: "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him". Will that suffice? Omnipotence in the Priest, the Priest, the Lord Jesus. Omnipotence in His intercession, so that a sinner, old though he may be, old even in grace, yet being a sinner and sinning alas, not openly, still sinning, he comes. Lord, he says, my religion is poor, my profession is very imperfect, very ragged. I have failed and I am failing always, but the Priest, Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, is able to save and to Thee I come by Him, and would argue on the ground of His omnipotent intercession. O I would order my cause. You may have a thousand difficulties, you may have quantities of afflictions and troubles in your family, in your business, in your person, in your soul, O but this meets them all, this meets them all. "Let us

come boldly unto the throne of grace". And the Bible will afford many many arguments in your favour, and say to you, take these, fill your mouth with these. You will as utterly have all excuses cast out as Israel had to cast out all leaven. When the Passover feast was kept no leaven was to be found in the whole of the coast of Israel and when you keep the Passover and eat it by precious faith you will have no excuses to leaven you but just that, and that only, the argument on the ground of Christ. Christ's Person, Christ's death, Christ's intercession, Christ's ability. That, I say again will suffice. "I would fill my mouth with arguments", as if he had been now, even while under accusations by his friends, considering God, and coming to this: I believe there is no remedy for me but in God and if I could but get to Him then I would speak with Him. Then I would speak with Him and what I would say is not like these men who are accusing me, but "Look on Thy Son; look on Him." The church argued this in the Psalms: "Let Thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." (Psalm 80 verses 17/18). If you pray without Christ you will be rejected, and your prayer will be no prayer, but if you, being a sinner, pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus and mention Him to His Father, you will find both access and acceptance and then answers will come in God's own time. May He command His blessing to rest upon us.

AMEN.