

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel
Brighton on Sunday morning 11 December, 1921

Job 42 verse 8

"Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to my servant Job, offer up for yourselves burnt offering, and My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right like My servant Job."

This book of Job, is a book, eminently constituted for afflicted people. It is also a book that sets before us, the petulance of human nature under affliction, the readiness of human nature to answer false accusations, the folly of men, attempting to reconcile the providential dealings of God with His people, when they are not under the instruction of the Holy Ghost, and the majesty of God, in coming to close the lips, and humble the heart, of an afflicted child of His; and the greatness, and graciousness, of God in restoring the afflicted child of His, restoring his health, and doubling his substance, and likewise, and finally, His mercy, to the men who did not understand Him, neither His afflicted servant Job, and the kind direction He gave them, as to what they should do, even take a sacrifice and offer it, and that Job should pray for them and they should be healed. There are five men in this book. The first and most prominent is Job, dealt with very solemnly by the Lord, for He it was who permitted the devil, the adversary, to touch Job's substance and then his person. Three, are the much misunderstanding friends of Job, whose pity was not sufficient to overcome their ignorance of God and of Job's character, and the fifth is Elihu, a type of Christ, in His coming, being raised up, according to Job's wish, in God's stead, reproving Job for his hasty speeches, which were as the wind, which came forth from one so desperate, and declaring of God's character to Job, greatly setting forth, how, that God did look down upon men, to see if there were any that did say "I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not", saying that in such a case. God was very gracious, and would deliver him from going down to the pit.

That which I would especially, as enabled, draw your attention to this morning, is the great matter of speaking the thing that is right of God. A second point I would notice is, that

where this is not done, when folly prompts us, when a hasty spirit moves us, urges us, hurries us, when there is not a watch set upon our mouth, and the door of our lips is not kept, when, out of the bitterness of a heart that is nearly broken with trouble, the lips speak unadvisedly, there is a sacrifice so as that God is gracious, a mercy-seat. He shows Himself propitious and deals graciously with the erring ones. What a mercy it is for us that God does not take advantage of all our wrong words, but that there is a fountain, opened for sin and uncleanness, whereby poor foolish, hasty creatures, saying wrong things often, are forgiven and cleansed. It is a great thing to have a heart right with God, and to be led to say the thing that is right of Him. His character is more than all creation. His Name is jealous, and He does not take it kindly of any child of His, when that child speaks unadvisedly, utters things hastily, out of an ill-temper and in self-justification. "Thou art the ever living God", one says to Him, "were all the nations dead".

In the beginning of his trouble, Job did say the thing that was right of God, for when the Sabeans, and the fire, and the Chaldeans, and the wind, took away from him all his substance and his family, then in all this, Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly. He said "The Lord gave". That was right. "The Lord hath taken away" That was right. God was honoured in those two simple utterances, "The Lord gave" He has given you all you have. We have nothing that God has not given us, except sin. If we have grace, that is from Him. "By grace are ye saved, through faith". If He has given us conviction of sin, that is from Him. What He has given us in providence, is from Him. Indeed we shall see His hand in it sooner or later. If He has blessed us with comforts in our souls, O what a God He is to do that. The Lord gave everything we have in body and soul. Every prospect that is good for eternity, if such prospect be ours, we owe to God, and it is good to see it, in everything giving thanks. "The Lord gave" That is easier to say than the next, "and the Lord hath taken away" How apt we are to think that what we have is our own, so our own, that if it is taken away, God is not kind. We are very apt to this. May the Lord give our hearts caution. Over and over again, throughout the book, Job said the thing that was right of God. He said in one chapter "He knoweth the way that I take". That was right. "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold". That was gracious confidence. It touched his heart, subdued his spirit, gave him patience, helped him to wait on God. The Lord gave him all that. "He knoweth the way that I take". He

knows my soul's exercises, my wants, my fears, my sinkings, my hopes as they are cast in him. He knoweth all that, and when He hath tried me, when He has put me to the tests which He has designed, when He has proved the weakness of my nature, the sinfulness of my heart, and also proved the genuineness of my faith, and the sincerity of my repentance, and the warmth of my love, and the firmness of my hope, then He will bring me forth as gold. Not only tried, but purified.

Is He a fire? he'll purge my dross;
But the true gold sustains no loss;
Like a refiner shall he sit,
And tread the refuse with his feet.

It is a great thing to speak this right thing concerning God. Job's friends did not this. They said many good things, but they were exceedingly unwise, in many things they said. They tried to vindicate God's honour, at the expense of Job's character. One said, "Whoever perished being innocent" That is to say, whoever got all this trouble except one who is a grievous sinner. This implied rank hypocrisy in Job. You strengthened the weak, you have done this, and that, but now trouble has come, it has revealed you, revealed your character and revealed God's anger. It was an unwise thing, and it was not right of God. It was not the thing that was true of God. It was trying to straighten that which God has made crooked, and to make understandable to fallen reason, the various cross providences, and afflictions, and cups of sorrow, which the Lord sends to His people. We cannot understand them on the ground of fallen human reason. Why the ungodly should prosper, and why the godly man should be much afflicted. Why one in the world should never hear one single word of fault found with him all his life long, but go on righteous in his own eyes, until he falls into perdition, and another, tender, God fearing person, should very often have some fault found with him by the Lord, something pointed out to him in his character, in his heart, in his thoughts, that God disapproves of, with which He is displeased. And why this godly person should have, over and over again, some most afflictive providences, whereby he is reduced here and there, you cannot understand naturally. You must be spiritual to understand God's ways, as well as His word. "His way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known." Never try O child of God, to straighten God's crossed hands. Never try to understand and fathom, by the plumb line

of your fallen reason, the dealings of God, and the reason of those dealings, for He giveth none account of any of His matters. Elihu speaks the thing that is right of God, therefore he reproves Job. He was a young man, and these three friends of Job, and his own, were older as he said, and he was afraid for a time to show his opinion. He listened quietly to what they had to say. He heard Job's replies, saw Job lift his head up before those, his accusers, and misunderstanding friends, and every time took no notice. Then he saw that they were amazed, as he says, they held their peace and he was then stirred. God the Spirit came to him and stirred up his heart, and gave him wisdom and understanding, in the cases, so that he pointed out to Job, where he was wrong - that Job had maintained his own integrity, when he ought not to have done, and in a great measure he was wrong here and there. Then he reproved Job's friends. He was, as Job had wished, in God's stead. Now the Lord comes. In the conclusion, He comes Himself. When Elihu has said all the Lord moved him to say, then the Lord Himself comes, and in these wonderful, remarkable, majestic chapters, which contain God's questions to Job, you have discoveries of the majesty and glory of God, coming down to a sinful man, to close that man's mouth, and in the close, in this chapter, Job comes to the ground. He could lift his head up before men, but he puts his mouth in the dust before God. He said to them - If I were in your case I could shake my head at you. But when God comes to him he says "I know that Thou canst do everything and that no thought can be withholden from Thee". All my thoughts are open to Thee. There is an alternative reading in the margin (or no thought of Thine can be hindered) and that is quite consistent with the first part of the verse. - I know that Thou canst do everything and no thought of Thy heart can ever be hindered by any creature or any circumstances. "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge" This is not a challenge. It was a challenge when God used the word to Job "Who is he that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge" Now Job as it were takes it up humbly, penitently, and says, I have done it. I have darkened counsel by words without knowledge. I have uttered that I understood not, I will speak no more. I have come to an end. My friends it is a great thing to come to an end of your contentions with God. A great thing to come to an end of your own wisdom, and understanding, and strength, and will. A great thing. Job's experience is good

here. "I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." It is not wise to say things that you do not understand. If we said no more of God than we know in our hearts, how much, how often should we speak? If a minister, if I, in this pulpit, said no more of God, of His providence, of His dealings, than I had experience of in my soul, how short, sometimes at least, would some of my preaching be. And, if we all, in our communications one with another, just said only that much that God has given to us, in our hearts, that we have felt, and tasted, and handled, it would not be a great deal that some would say. But it is a mercy to know a little and a mercy too, if having said wrong things, God shows us that we have done so, and gives us grace to say with Job here I understood not those things I said, and I am sorry. "Hear I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand of Thee", come to Thee for a blessing in faith. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. "Wherefore", as the effect of that, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Who can get low enough when God comes to him? Who can be ashamed enough in the presence of God? Who can confess enough when he is before God? It is a great thing to be saved from the unbelieving flippancy of our nature; saved from the rash conclusions we may arrive at by reasoning on some scriptures, by reasoning about some providence. O beware of reason, beware of reasoning, beware of unbelief, you who profess to fear God. His way is in the sea, His path in the mighty waters. Darkness is His pavilion. The clouds are the dust of His feet. Who can understand his errors. Who can understand God's greatness. These things rightly felt, produce sobriety of mind. Are you sober? These things rightly felt make people feel how little they are - dust and ashes. We are very poor and small creatures really, to wield about, just as God, in His providence, wills. We will this, and we will that, and it is nothing of the sort. It is just this, "In Him we live and move and have our being." Yet we are so proud, we wont acknowledge it by nature. Who is the Lord that I should obey Him, and what profit is there if I should pray unto Him, is the proud language of our fallen nature. But then, have we erred? Are any of us convinced this morning that we have erred with our lips, with our hearts, that we have uttered things we understood not, and do we, in any measure, feel that we can say - we have heard of God by the hearing of the ear, heard of Him in providence, heard of Him from the pulpit, heard of Him in the family, heard of Him in the scripture, but now, we have seen Him in some measure, in His word, in His Spirit's teaching, in His holy providence, heard Him. O, that is great. Seen Him, that

is greater, clearer. You can collect some knowledge by hearing. You gather much more by seeing. You may imagine many things of God, but if you see Him, in the measure in which you see Him, you know Him. But then, have we erred? Said the Lord to these men "Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you." This points to the one offering that took away sin. Christ, by one offering, put away sin. Put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. Whenever God convinces a sinner of sin, He leads him to the atonement of Christ. Whenever the Holy Spirit will do you good, by showing you your errors, and your sins, He will not leave off there, but He will take you by the hand, and lead you graciously, to the Lord Jesus. Oh what we owe to the Spirit of God, we shall never fully appreciate here. But it is a great mercy that there is a sacrifice, and that that sacrifice is sufficient. It is eternal redemption, and that in that sacrifice, and by that one Mediator, Jesus Christ, poor erring creatures are accepted. "For him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly", O, if there be nothing between God and us in our folly, what a solemn and awful thing it will be for us. Poor sinner, if you look at your follies, at your sins, that is, and have nothing else to look at, but a great God against whom those follies have been committed, what will become of you? But, if the Holy Spirit, in His kindness and love, showing you your follies and faults, then takes you, as I said, by the hand, and leads you to the one offering of the Lord Jesus, then there is that between you and God, between you and death, between you and condemnation. This enhances, to every one to whom it is shown by the Spirit, the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. It brings us to one point - "Other refuge have I none" It gives us this one plea "If ye shall ask anything in My Name" It puts us on the one ground - the Rock of Ages. It brings us into intimacy with the blessed God. I will accept you. I wont keep you at a distance. I wont deal with you as men in their folly. O sinner, if you see your sins in the light of God's teaching, you are coming right, and God will lead you to the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and that will bring peace. You will be accepted, accepted in the Beloved.

Now I have dwelt on these various points a little, but now I must come to the word, which I said would be my principal word this morning, namely, the speaking of the thing which is right,

the speaking of the thing which is right concerning, not ourselves first, nor principally, but concerning God. That is the great thing. There is a great deal said of God to-day in the religious world, that is not right. I feel, sometimes, when I look at such and such things which are said in the religious world, by so called religious leaders and teachers, that my very soul is moved with indignation. I also feel this - a desire for the rest of my days, and it must be a little, I desire to speak the thing of God which is right, right according to scripture, right according to the teaching of the Eternal Spirit in the heart. So may you be enabled to give me your attention, while I try to say some few things concerning God, and may He prevent me from saying anything that would derogate from His majesty, belittle His mercy, or in any way tarnish His glory. God is right. He is right, He is just, He never can do anything but what is absolutely, infinitely just. He is good, and can never do anything that is not good. He is full of mercy and compassion, and no poor, convinced, confessing sinner, shall ever prove the contrary of what I have said. He is full of mercy and compassion. Now this is right of God first - that He has a mind. That He has a will. You would not think it to-day, if you believe what men say of Him. The most you would think would be this - that He wishes to do people good if they will but let Him. He would like to save them, if they would only allow Him to do it. Now it is a mercy that God has a mind, a will, and that will is that poor sinners should see, and believe in Him, and have everlasting life. And, that when a sense of sin is on the heart, and when men are depressed by that, when they see what a hell they deserve, what a black thing human nature is, how utterly lost, how deeply depraved, how unfathomably deceitful and wicked (unfathomable, it is indeed deceitful and wicked) then I say this is true, this is right, "He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." He will by no means clear the guilty who are impenitent, and hard, and live dead in trespasses and sins. There is to be, between a gracious God and a convinced sinner, contact. There is to be nearness. There is to be a familiarity. This God will have. How shall this come to pass? Only by the blessed teaching, and grace of the Spirit, bringing the blood of the Everlasting Covenant to the conscience and that, from time to time, if the mercy of God comes, you will find

more unfathomable even than your own wickedness. You will find it greater than your sins, and this, throughout the pilgrimage, no matter how long, nor how painful, this shall be true- With the Lord there is mercy, that He may be feared, and with Him is plenteous redemption, reaching all the bondage and all the fear, and all the trouble of a child of His. If you are in trouble, who is not? But some are, in particular. Some of our friends who are absent are in trouble. They are afflicted, afflicted in body, some in mind too. If you are in trouble, that trouble may be just as in Job's case, so moderated and mollified by mercy, as that you will say in the beginning of it "It is the Lord" Job saw no Sabeans, no Chaldeans, no wind, no fire. All he saw in the beginning of his trouble was God. "The Lord gave" That must have been a remarkable degree of grace, to overcome nature in such a trouble, that, bereaved of his property, of his family, of his wealth, he should say "The Lord is right" "In all this Job sinned not with his lips;" in the first instance "nor charged God foolishly." He said the thing that was right. Now it is a good thing when it pleases the blessed Spirit to give a person in trouble enough grace to cease reasoning. "Never reason more about it" The more you reason on the lines of corrupted reason, the more you look, when the awful astigmatism of ignorance is on your mind, or the veil, to use the scripture, is on your heart, the more perplexed you will be. "He giveth none account of any of His matters" I believe God will have His people submit themselves unreservedly to Him. They are brought to it. "Thy will be done" You measure if you try, you measure God, and you will find you are out of it altogether, but when you are enabled to fall flat before Him, you will learn something of the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him, and that secret will be, that He will show you that His love is in the bitterest cup, that there is no curse in the heaviest cross, that there is no anger in the stroke that gives the deepest wound, and the sharpest pain. Then you will say "It is the Lord" He has His way in the sea, His path in the mighty waters, and He does not do often what the leviathan does. The leviathan lashes the deep into such foams, that you would see, as it is in the book of Job, the deepest foam, but God does not leave a track sometimes of His mercy, of His goodness, of His love, of His power. You just are bewildered, and here is the place for faith. "Lord save or I perish" Here is the place for that blessed grace to come into

exercise, that He cannot do wrong.

It is the Lord enthroned in light
Whose claims are all divine;
Who has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine

Can you use that one important word in that verse, undisputed? I have stuck at it more than once. O it is a great thing to come to it - undisputed. Nature says - Who is the Lord? Pride says - Who is the Lord? Reason says - He is not wise, He is not kind, He is not good; the scripture is not true. Faith says - He is right, He is true, He is good, He is merciful. Faith, without sight, faith, without sense and comfort, is sometimes brought by the Eternal Spirit to this point

He cannot do but what is right
And must be righteous still

That is saying the thing that is right of God. Has the Lord gone from you for a time, you who have known His presence? Now in such a case, it is a great thing to say the thing that is right of Him, and what would that be? You would perhaps say with one "Is His mercy clean gone for ever, doth His promise fail for evermore, hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies" Well, but you will come just to the same conclusion, eventually, that the Psalmist arrived at. "I said, this is my infirmity." Erskine says

Say not He is gone for ever
Though His visits He adjourns

He will come again. He says "I will see you again" Do you get no comfortable access in prayer? Do you feel as if, when you cry and shout, He shuts out your prayer? Well, the Lord did that with Jeremiah, and Jeremiah found the Comforter who should comfort his soul, was far from him, and yet it was not a right thing to conclude that his prayer was shut out, because he did not feel that it entered. We are not good judges sometimes, as to the prayer that we pray. We are not good judges. We may find this in our experience, later, that the very prayers we thought were only chattering, and of no value in the eye of God at all, not uttered by faith, that the very prayers entered the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. It is a great thing to hold fast to this that whom once He loves He never leaves. That, to whom He has given the spirit of grace and of supplication, He will most mercifully lend a patient ear, even though they may sometimes feel - Well it is no use praying, we

get no answers. Does He withhold consolation from you, so that you cannot now sing songs in the night, and does the enemy say - Well now, this is an evidence that you are wrong. When you most need religion it is gone from you, when you most need comfort, you get none. O but God will not give an account to the devil, nor to you for a time, if ever, why He withholds. The thing is, to be enabled to hold fast to the unchangeable character of God in all His dealings and this is His character. It is indeed His Name - God is Love. To His children He is nothing but love. Why, He tells us distinctly that He rebukes whom He loves. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent" Do you find providence adverse? Things to which you put your hand, about which you use your utmost endeavours, things which ordinarily should prosper, that those very things are adverse? Like a man expecting good and holding on a while, at last comes to say it will never come. Now that was one of Job's foolish speeches. He said to His friends "Have pity upon me O my friends, mine eye shall no more see good". It was foolish. Later he came to say this "I know that my Redeemer liveth and I shall see Him for myself" That was seeing good, seeing it in prospect. Well, if the Lord sends adversity, if He crosses you in your projects, if He makes holes in your bag into which you put your wages, if He seems as if He is determined to bring you to the ground, may faith be strong enough to do what it did in the heart of Job, on one occasion, when he said "I know that my Redeemer liveth" and again he said "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." This was all saying the right thing, the thing that was right of God, and whenever we say that in faith, we always say another thing about ourselves, we condemn ourselves. Everyone who says the thing that is right of God, is sure to condemn himself. He will say "I am a worm and no man" I have uttered that I understood not. I have been foolish in the extreme. When God challenged him - "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge" the first word we hear may enlarge. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel" I am the man, Lord. I have done it. I am the sinner. Now I will close my mouth and do "Thou have mercy on me. "Thou hast not said the thing that is right like my servant Job" O what a mercy, if we are convinced of any foolishness. If God, looking down, hears us say "I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it

profited me not," that then, the atonement comes, the blessed atonement of Jesus Christ, whereby all the folly and all the foolish things, and schemes, we have uttered and thought about, are forgiven through the blood of the everlasting covenant.