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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, by
Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
4th September 1932

Text John 12 verses 32 & 33

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die"

In speaking this morning from the last clause of the twenty first verse "Sir, we would see Jesus." I remarked that we hear no more of the Greeks who expressed, in these words their desire to see Jesus, because the Lord took advantage, so to speak, of the question which propounded the deepest truth concerning Himself. And Jesus answered, when Andrew and Philip, came and told Him, the desire of the Greeks, "saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (verse 23). This is the profound truth, He propounded "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (verse 24). Wheat that is never seen, never multiplies. If Christ had not died, there could have been no church, growing out of Him. Whether the Greeks were favoured to receive that doctrine, we are not informed, but it is a doctrine, that the pride of the human heart, will never submit to. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." (verse 25). This brought forth also the solemn word of Christ "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour". (verse 27). This respects the text, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said signifying what death He should die." And in respect to this manner of His dying, or what death He should die, we may make one or two observations. First it was not indifferent, whether Christ should be stoned, or hanged on a tree. The hanging of Him on a tree, was a symbol of the curse. You find that by Moses, the Lord said, that "if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;)" Deuteronomy 21 verses 22,23). This manner of Christ's dying was very important. Let us look a little at that which is glorified. The second remark, I would make, is - The death of Christ was not an ordinary death, it was the death that love ordained, the death that the curse of the law commanded, the death that the Father of the Lord Jesus, imposed, on His Son. "This commandment (said Christ respecting His death, His voluntary death,) have I received of My Father." (John 10 verse 18)

It was the death that infinite justice was determined upon, it was the death that mercy desired, because if Christ died not, mercy could not reach sinners. It was the death that holiness divine required, for if Christ did not die, and therefore remove sin, no sinner could ever have access to God. It was a vicarious death, I am attached to that word vicarious, because it tells us that Christ, so dying, redeemed all, for whom He stood, therefore it was the death of a substitute. A substitute is one who takes precisely, wholly, the position of the persons, for whom He is a substitute, by justice, of the person, who was before God, in the law, what was required of the substitute. Nothing but full obedience, could abate wholly, absolutely, the debt, the guilt, the turpitude, of a life, of every sin, and all guilt, which God imputed to His Son, as the substitute of His people.

O believer, if God helps you, to hang on that word substitute, and lets you know that Christ, was a substitute for you. You will find heaven in your heart. Peace, the peace of God, in your conscience. This is the lifting up of Christ. This is the cross of Christ, to preach this, was Paul's single aim, and determination. He said to the Corinthian Church. "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."(1 Corinthians 2 verse 2). I could enter into other things, but I will not, because, other things, science, learning, and the matters with which Paul was intimately acquainted, would do a sinner no good. Only the cross, therefore he said to the Galatians "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."(Galatians 6 verse 14).

And I, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, very God, very Man, the Eternal Son of God, mysteriously, lovingly, in union with His Divine Person, not to make two Persons, but only One, Emmanuel is His Name, (Matthew 1 verse 23), "For unto us a child born, unto us a son given:..and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9 verse 6). And I, the Saviour of the lost, I the substitute for My people, I the lover of My church, My spouse. " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me. This He said signifying what death He should die". Let us look at this drawing, there is a holy attraction in it. If I were to let down from this pulpit, a plumb line, and there should be, at the right hand a little pile, and on the left hand a mole hill, to which would the plumb line be deflected? You know, the hill would deflect the plumb line, from the straight line. If you see Jesus lifted up, if you get a sight of His Person, of His death, the whole world will not draw your soul, but Himself will attract you. This is the drawing.

Let us look at the characters drawn by Christ Himself. Good people in their own estimation? No, the Pharisee? No. Naaman the leper, David the adulterer and murderer. Listen to the deep groan, that brought out the words of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner".(Luke 18 verse 13). Hear the gasping dying breath of the thief on the cross, "Lord remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom".(Luke 23 verse 42). Hear the trembling, anguished, piercing cry of the jailor, "What must I do to be saved".(Acts 16 verse 30). Listen to the cry of three thousand people, in one day, at the divine effect of Peter's preaching, "What shall we do".(Acts 2 verse 37). These are the people, the kind of people, for whom Christ was lifted up. Let me ask one or two questions, to you dear hearers. Do you say of yourselves, you never were blind?, then you are not drawn by the uplifted Saviour. Do you say, we never were in bondage? Then you are not drawn to the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Look at your cases, are you convinced of sin? Is conviction more than a scratch on your conscience, just a piercing, penetrating conviction, that you are utterly lost? Do you realise that day by day, you exemplify in your life, whether you feel it or not, that scripture, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,"(Ecclesiastes 7 verse 20), do you understand what unbelief is? that in plain English unbelief is atheism, practical atheism? An atheist is a person without God, as of course you know, the word atheist, is made up of two Greek words, atheos or without, and theos God. Without God, do you know that?

Do you feel on your conscience, the burden of your sins, of your guilt? If you say, no devil, no unbelief, no attractions of the world, will draw you away from this uplifted Saviour, when you see Him lifted up. The cross of Christ is the centre and circumference of the hope of the church, the attractions of her faith, that cross is the sinners argument with God for forgiveness. It is the sinners prop against despair. The cross is his only hope, of going honourably through life, with its difficulties, and its snares, and all the pitfalls that the devil craftily sets. What is this drawing? First it is the attraction of the precious blood of Christ. O what value there is in the infinitely meritorious blood of Christ. That beautiful scripture in the first epistle of Peter, has been something to some of us. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1 verses 18 & 19). That blood sprinkled on the conscience purifies it. The Apostle Paul in the Hebrews, tells us "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (that is a Jew purified himself, so that he was permitted to enter the tabernacle and serve God) "How much more"

(The emphasis you understand, who have felt the blood of Christ on your conscience, or you having not felt that, have believed that the blood could do it) "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works," (Hebrews 9 verses 13 & 14). What a wonder of wonders it is, when the conscience of a sinner, is without guilt. when he can look up to God and say, so to speak, to Him,

I'm clean just God, I'm clean. (Gadsby's 29 verse 4)
(adjusted from third to first person, ie from We're to I'm)

By that blood, the church of God, and every individual member of it, has access to God, "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."(Ephesians 2 verse 18). If religion, the religion you profess, and that I profess, never brings us unto the holy, awful, sweet, gracious, friendly presence of God, it is of no value to us. Sooner or later every regenerated person gets access to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, then the righteousness of Christ is an attraction. If we know and feel our filthy rags, if we have been brought under the law, to realise that God will accept nothing but perfection, then what have we felt? How have we sunk in our feelings, been ready to fly away, Adam like, to hide ourselves from God's presence. But if the Holy Ghost, has taken of the glorious robe of Christ's righteousness, and revealed it to us, and enabled us to lay hold of it, and put it on by faith, then we understand what it is to have boldness, and to believe that we shall have boldness in that great day, when God will separate the goats from the sheep. Clothed in this rich vesture a man, a sinful man, has a title to heaven, a right to it, and a fitness for it.

"Will draw all men," publicans, sinners and harlots, drawn to Jesus, who is the friend of sinners. O what a beautiful word of Hart's:

Christ is the friend of sinners;
Be that forgotten never;
A wounded soul, and not a whole,
Becomes a true believer; (Gadsby's 806 verse 1)

If you see His friendly face, you will go to Him, you will understand a little, of that in Elihu's word "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. Behold my terror shall not make thee afraid," (Job 33 verse 6 & 7). Why sinner, there is not a scripture in the whole of this blessed book, that stands against you, if you have faith in the Lord Jesus, and if you get a sight now and again, of His well pleased face. He draws debtors, fraudulent bankrupts, convinced of sin.

As a debtor you will not say, Lord, I could not help it, you will say I did it willfully. I plunged myself into sin, and into debt for them, and I have nothing wherewith to pay. And then He will frankly forgive you. One of the most beautiful words in the scripture, "And when he had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both." (Luke 7 verse 42). You cannot remember your debts, you cannot reckon them up. Speaking of his sins, one said, "They are more than the hairs of my head." (Psalm 40 verse 12). You cannot remember your sins, think of this, the thought of foolishness is sin. How many foolish thoughts have you had in a day, this day? You cannot reckon them up. They must be frankly forgiven, debt wiped out, not like the account of a tradesman. An account against a customer, when the debt is paid, he just writes across it paid, and that stands in a court, but it is always in his book. God says "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins:" (Isaiah 44 verse 22). Nobody could see them, "for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back," (Isaiah 38 verse 17) into the depths of the sea. And God with singular grace, and mercy, takes to Himself, as it were, human memory, memory with us is very apt to fail, and a thing that we forget, really forget, as for the time at any rate, is just not existing to our memory. Now God, in the covenant of grace, and this atonement, is in the covenant of grace, says, "I will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31 verse 34).

You think of it, you remember them, and the more forgiveness is pressed in your heart, the more you will remember your sins, and condition as a fallen person. But He says, "I will remember them no more". I will never bring them up against you in judgement, you are without spot, without wrinkle, without a spot to offend Him, without a wrinkle to indicate decay, no blameworthiness attaches to a forgiven, justified person. Christ draws such as these, well what a wonder, He draws all kinds of men. Not every man, but all kinds of men, Jews and Gentiles, bringing each one into the dust of conviction, and self abhorrence. And then "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes," (even the princes of His people,) "and to make them to inherit the throne of glory:" (1 Samuel 2 verse 8).

Christ draws by His word, this blessed Book, this entirely inspired Bible. O my friends cleave to it. Christ sometimes will draw you by a part of it. He will say to you "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11 verse 28). Come unto Me, I rest from My works, as God rested from His works of creation, and sanctified the seventh day, and called it holy. And I rest now from my work of redemption.

"Come unto Me" I will give you a Sabbath, that draws you, and you slide into the promised rest, and prove the Sabbath true. It is a sabbatism indeed, that the Saviour gives, to these drawn ones, as some of us know. He draws by His Spirit, promising the Holy Ghost in the gospel, Christ said "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16 verse 14). A solemn scripture, a testing word, have you ever had, the glory of Christ made known to you? Has He ever been a real Person to you, and have the beams of His grace and loveliness, and glory, fallen upon your heart, so as to dissolve it, and raise you up into happiness, thankfulness and joyfulness? "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine" Take of My things, He shall be in My stead, or teacher. He shall be the sealer of you until the day of redemption, and He shall cause you to rise in the power of My resurrection.

Did you ever get a blink, of the glories of Jesus Christ, of His person, of His work, of His real death, of His actual burial, of His resurrection, of His Ascension into heaven, of His presence there as our Great High Priest, and our Intercessor? Unspeakable glory, uttered in a moment, rarely felt, never fully felt here. That is the Spirit's work. And further, "He shall glorify Me," as your helping, faithful friend, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee:" (Psalm 55 verse 22). And may we never, endeavour to disassociate, His death from His bearing our burdens. He could never have borne, the burdens of a sinner, if He had not redeemed, that sinner by His precious blood. O hang on to the blood of Christ, my dear troubled Christian friend, you will get liberty that way, for He has said "Cast thy burdens on (Me) the Lord." I bore your sins, I will bear your troubles. "Take up the cross, and follow Me." Mark 10 verse 21). I will carry both you and your cross. What a mercy it is to be favoured, to cast our burdens on the Lord. We shall never be wholly without trouble, while here. It is a part of the promise that Jesus Christ gave, "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16 verse 33). For "in Me ye shall have peace." (verse 33).

They will go together mind, the world and tribulation. That is in the world, and the world has trouble. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." (Job 14 verse 1). But the trouble that is not tribulation, does not separate the chaff from the wheat. And unless you get some separation, of the chaff from the wheat of grace in you, you have no reason to think that your trouble is tribulation. It is a distinguished point, and very important, because you will find worldly people, burdened with many things and often in much trouble.

The same providential matters, may come to a child of God, and to an infidel living close together, and the one gets good from it, and the other is hardened. Christ draws His people to Him that they may go to heaven. Those who, would not believe in heaven, but in some way would wish to get there, but the way to it, the qualification for it, that makes it another matter, besides which, if you have no grace, heaven would not be heaven to you. I believe the beauty and glory of heaven, would be a torment, to every unregenerate person. Who might for one moment, let us suppose it possible, be within these glorious gates, but the child of God has a heavenly nature, called the divine nature, and Christ draws him towards heaven.

Sometimes, I'm very glad, not to be young. I feel for you young people, as I told you before. Heavy times are before you, may the Lord give you grace, to live in them, and through them, but to be old, and to be favoured with some tokens for good, and some intimations, that the time is approaching, when you will leave this world, and be where Christ is, that is a very desirable thing. One would not live always "If I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me." Do not think that this means good people. You will never go to heaven, as good people in yourselves, you will go as saved sinners, as washed sinners, as justified sinners, as having union with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

Well my dear friends, has the Lord drawn us? There are plenty of attractions in the world, suited to our nature, has Jesus Christ drawn us from them? Has He enabled us to say, compared with Himself?:

Jewels to Thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust. (Gadsby's 138 verse 2)

Not a light thing indeed for us to say, but a good thing to be able to say it. He is a favoured man who gets what Job got. Such a hearing of God, and such a hearing, as made him say:"Behold, I am vile;"(Job 40 verse 4). And a good thing it is to be able, through the Holy Ghost, to say; "I am my Beloved's," (He died for me, He drew me to Himself,) "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine:"(Song of Solomon 6 verse 3). Mine by union, I am His by purchase, I am His by regeneration I am His by the attractions of His cross. May the Lord draw you, may He constantly do it, powerfully do it, and grant that the things that are dangled before your eyes, by the tempter and by the world, suited to our nature, may not be allowed to bewitch your eyes, but that they may be fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you ever pray this prayer, fix my heart, let it be for ever closed to all but Thee? Were you ever able to say to the Lord my heart is fixed?

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." (Psalm 5 verse 7). I would like to be able to say that every day. The gadding spirit is a troublesome spirit, to a child of God. You may gad about to the end of the world, while you are on your knees, and utter the words of prayer. Everything in us makes the attraction of Christ necessary, to us, to save us.

Now I must leave it. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is to be administered, and by that, I hope it may please Jesus Christ to draw us top Himself. For this table could not have been spread as it is, if Jesus Christ had not been lifted up from the earth, and poured out His soul unto death.

Amen