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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 2 February 1921

JOHN 12 v 32

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will
draw all men unto Me."

Between man fallen and Almighty God, there is an infinite distance, the distance, not of creatureship only, but the distance of sin, alienation, darkness, ignorance, enmity, guilt, death, and curse, and man knows it not. He says, Am I blind? What a terrible condition we are in by the fall, and by our own practices, and while time is hastening us to eternity we live, naturally, as if we are always to be. "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow shall be as this day, yea and much more abundant." This folly is in every man's heart. We are no better than the veriest infidel or reprobate upon the earth or in hell. It is a solemn confession to make. We may make it very much as a matter of habit, but when we make it as a matter of feeling, of conviction, it is then very solemn. Beware of religious talk without any feeling. Beware of calling yourself low, and evil names, without any feeling. Men may say they are dogs, and reptiles, and everything that is bad, and yet be very proud of saying so. But when poor sinners, such as some of us know, and feel ourselves to be, as we get older in that experience, then it is not so easy to use such strong terms of reprobation concerning ourselves. I think Christ expresses the whole that we feel, and express in any terms, by one word, and that is "lost". "The Son of Man came to save that which is lost" And the feeling of being lost, when you, in the morning find your hearts wandering; in the day find your minds engaged about things which perish, and are hardly worth a thought; when you find the Scriptures are not the Book of your preference, not the Book of your heart, and not the companion of your spirit; when you find that the throne of grace does not attract you; when you find that you are cumbered with much serving, burdened with the things of this life, as if all your interest was there; when you find no energy to seek the face of God to return; then I say, being lost is a serious, and solemn thing. I

believe I speak the experience of some people here. I was not half as bad years ago as I am today in my experience of sin. It is a solemn thing to live to be a sinner, to live to sin, but it is a merciful thing to live under a sense of sin, and the conviction of sin, a fear of sin, a seeking the face of God to deliver you from sin, and from the dominion of it, and the guilt of it, the allurements of it, the deception of it. Well, this distance is great, solemn, solemnly felt - the distance of sin; and yet it is a poor religion that has not got it. You have got a poor religion if you have not this, in some measure. O, bless God, this is not all. There is something else said. May you never miss that black side; may you never get beyond saying - "I am black", as to yourself. But, blessed be God, there is such a mercy as this, that a black sinner may affirm of himself that he is also comely, and that is what every living soul well instructed by the Spirit wants to come to.

Here, in our text, is that great sacrifice, that great High Priest making the sacrifice whereby the lost are saved, and whereby the children of the living God are made nigh. You that were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. O, invaluable blood. O glorious Priest, High Priest. What a mercy it is to feel your heart taken up with Him. And O, what a mercy it is, even if you cannot say - "I am my beloved's" - to be able to say, I want Him, cannot do without Him, would not dispense with Him if I might. Jesus spake this great, this sealing word of salvation - "And I, if I be lifted up". By this lifting up of Christ the judgement of the world came to pass, and the prince of this world was cast out. "Now is the prince of this world cast out", even by the death of Christ. The lifting up here is the signifying of the death He should die; that He should die on the accursed tree, as it is written - "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree", and Jesus did hang on the tree. It is a great sight that, to see Christ there. Newton got it. He said

I saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood

Did you ever get it? Did it ever come to you, this great sight, Christ crucified? It will swallow you up. If you get it, it will swallow you up. It will remove your guilt, dissolve your hardness, take away your

distance from God, reconcile you, humble you, purify you, sanctify you to the Lord, make you in your own eyes little; in your affections, warm and lowly; in your will, submissive; in your understanding, wise; in your hopes, very sweetly carried forward to eternity; and nothing shall hinder this in respect of the church, the saints of the Most High. I will draw all unto Me. They shall come; bad as they are, they shall come. Guilty, and dead, and weak, and poor as they feel, they shall come. Christ will have them, so He sends out His servants to compel them to come in, to meet with all their objections by the infinitude of His mercy, of His atoning blood, of His justifying righteousness. Men lifted Him up; men wagged their heads at Him; men scorned Him; men mocked Him, put on His sacred brow a crown of thorns, smote Him with their hands, hated Him in their hearts, persecuted, and slew Him with their wicked hands. Ah, but there was a lifting up in that, that they understood not. They, in their thoughts, as in their intentions, were getting rid of Him. The world went after Him, and they hated it, so that they were getting rid of Him, as they thought, and meant, and He was getting rid of their god, the devil. He was casting their prince out, the devil. And more than that, He was saving His people, He was delivering them from the bondage of their sins, the curse of the law, and all their guilt. He was opening a grave without a bottom, an everlasting abyss in which all their sins would be cast, never to rise against them.

The lifting up was the lifting up by God the Father. He gave Him a commandment to die. It was the lifting up of the inexorable law; that lifted Him up. He stood in the stead of law breakers. It was the lifting up by justice divine. Awake O sword against My fellow. It was the Father's lifting up. He delivered His only Son to death. "He that spared not His Own Son", the Son of Himself, "but delivered Him up for us all". What a solemn lifting up this was. God the Father said to Him that He must die, gave Him that commandment. It was a lifting up by the law. That law that was inexorable could not forego one claim, abate one single iota of its demand upon Him. It was the lifting up by the Spirit, of divine justice. "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered"

Look ye saints, the sight is glorious

Did it ever attract your eyes? If you were in a dark place, and you saw, underneath the door of it, a little light just coming through that little space, it would attract, it would draw your eyes, it would guide you to the door. Though the light were but little, it would attract you, and draw you. O, if we got a sight of the Light of the World on the cross, if we got a sight of the Lord Jesus, it would attract, and hold our eyes; it would guide our feet toward Himself. That is the drawing, powerful inshining. What a great thing it is ever to see an uplifted Christ, there between heaven and earth, a spectacle to man. And they wagged their heads at Him, they shot out their tongues against Him, they mocked Him, they challenged Him to prove His Divinity by coming down from the cross, saying that they then would believe Him. They did all this, and it moved Him not. No, it moved Him not. There He was, content to be there, content to be there, a spectacle for God, a sight for His Father's eyes, a satisfaction for His Father's heart, a pleasure, a pleasure. The Father was pleased to bruise Him. O, my friends, pleased to bruise Him, to put Him to grief. It pleased His Father to call on the sword of justice to awake against Him, and this was the lifting up. His Father saw Him there, and withdrew from Him, withdrew the light of His countenance, and the consolation of His love; withdrew the supporting hand that had made the Lord Jesus rejoice in spirit, withdrew from Him for the time. O those hours when Christ was lifted up, and men mocked Him, and devils hated Him, and the Father forsook Him, and justice pierced Him and oppressed Him, and came to Him with a sword to pierce Him through, and through. That was lifting up. No mere crucifixion of His body - it was that - but an infinite depth there was beneath that, an infinite anguish, an infinite sorrow, an infinite struggle, an infinite satisfaction. My friends, the sight, if we get it, will wonderfully humble us, and show to us the awful magnitude of sin, and the terrors of the Almighty, and the greatness of the law, and the wonders of infinite holiness, and justice, and the unknowable depths of infinite love. And was all this for us? This lifting up, was it all for us? And did the darling Son of God endure all this for us? This amazing exhibition and expenditure of infinite love, was this for us that we, feeling our guilt, may get relief: Feeling our ignorance, may have instruction? Feeling our

alienation, may be reconciled? Was it all for us? We shall never be satisfied till the Lord tells us so, if indeed the Lord did this for us. He had a great work to do. He had to raise a number that no man can number out of the sleep of death in sin. He had to justify that number, that innumerable number, making them all quite straight, and square, and equal with the law in its strictest demands. He had to satisfy all the requirements of divine holiness, and the happiness of this people. It was a great work, a wonderful work. Think of it sinner. He had to do that. It will break to shivers your pride; it will consume your infidelity, it will remove all your hypocrisy, it will obliterate your worldliness eventually, and take away every speck, and stain, and mark of sin eventually, and shall bring into your bodies, and on them, the likeness of that glorified Man in heaven, Jesus Christ. This was what He had to do, nothing less. Did you ever love Him for doing it - at any rate for a hope that He did it - for you? Sin is no trifle. And when seen in the crucifixion of Christ, it is seen to be an awful reality, a black thing; it is seen to be full of malignity, and bitterness, and enmity, and transgression, and every evil thing. O, monster sin, who could grapple with it so as to overcome it, and remove it, but this Blessed One who was lifted up? Does sin afflict you? O, bless God if you can say, Yes. If you can say, My pride wounds me, my worldliness distresses me, my guilt sinks me, my wandering dismays me; if you can say, And these things I hide not from the Lord - My sin have I not hid. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD" then, I say, O, blessed sinner, O, blessed sinner. And I do not mock anybody by saying that, neither am I as one who sings songs to a heavy heart, or takes away a garment in winter, for, in saying that, I would point you to the Lamb of God, as John did. He saw Him, and then preached Him - "Behold the Lamb of God". It was for sinners. There is a monstrosity in sin that can never be expressed, and it is seen in its terribleness on the cross. If we knew more of sin we should value Christ more as we came to know Him. May the Lord grant that we may not live in ignorance of sin, for he who lives in ignorance of sin, hides it, and he shall have no mercy if he dies so. Sin repented of is quickly forgiven. Sin hated by the grace of God, says the sinner who hates sin is loved of His God. Christ hated it, but it came to Him, it was imputed to Him, and He took it away.

Now what is to be the effect of this? "I will draw all men unto Me." And we will look at this a little, because it suits the want, the feeling of our hearts, it suits us, we can go along with the church in her prayer - "Draw me, we will run after Thee". I say, it suits us, it suits me. I believe that Scripture, and I am sure some of you do - "Without Me ye can do nothing", and especially in this spiritual movement, because it is a movement, a spiritual movement, an exercise. It is a labour, for when a drawn soul moves towards Him who draws it, all hell, all sin, all subtlety, all pride, all legality, will stand up and say, You shall not go that way. Ah, there is an opposition. You will have to fight every inch of your way. One real step taken toward heaven you will fight for, and every step you will fight for, and yet the drawing makes it quite easy to go. I know it seems a contradiction, but some of you can interpret it. O, when you would pray, something comes and opposes you. When you would look to Christ, then unbelief and reason oppose you. But when you are drawn, it is just as if, in a moment, you have flown to Him. "Who are these that fly as doves to their windows?" Who is this poor sinner who, feeling one moment he cannot move, and cannot pray, and dare not hope, now in the next finds himself, as it were, flying to Christ? Why, he is one who is drawn. You will see the Lord's people running as horses in Pharoah's chariot. You will see them running after Him. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib". There is a suddenness, a sweetness, an efficacy, in the drawing of Christ, and with all that, there is the labour. "Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest". If we go, being drawn, we shall go with some things. We shall go in the face of some things. We shall go for some things. It will be a labour. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". What will you go with, when you are drawn? The very things which, in your legal race, you think you must get rid of before you may venture, before you ought to venture. Your sins, you will go with them. You will never get rid of them but by this blessed lifting up of Christ, never. O, sinner, it is sure to be so. A revealed Christ will be this in its language in your heart - "The Son of Man came to save the lost". And then you will say, I am lost, I am lost. I am one of those people lost in my sins, and all manner of sin I have. Well, I do not get on well with little sinners. I know there are no such people, but there are some who seem to be. I get on well with real sinners, and big sinners.

Christ is a great Saviour, a great Saviour. You say, You have no mark of a saint about you. Well, suppose it to be true - though, of course, it is not; if you are a living soul, you have some marks of a saint about you - but just grant for a moment that it is true; what then? If He draws you, you will go just as a sinner. Yes, it will be like that. I do not mean at the beginning only. Why, I expect many of you can go with me according to the time you have made a profession - as I, with regard to my own time - you go with me in this, it is harder today in some important respects to use Toplady's language than it was when we were first started out

Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling

We did not expect it to get more difficult to use that language, but we have found it to be so. We must be saved as sinners. A very simple thing for me to say, of course, but not a simple thing for me to learn, nor for you to learn. O, hard it is. But He draws, and we go with sins, we go with our backslidings, our shortcomings, and the things we have thought, the murmuring we have been guilty of, the wandering, the heart wandering, the dishonour we have done to the Lord; the wishing that we are not what we are, that we are where we are; the wishing that this cross was removed, and that burden taken away. The foolish conclusions at which we have sometimes arrived, saying in our hearts, If this were not as it is, we could serve the Lord. If we had not this weighty cross, we could get on better. We should not be turned aside as we are. Why, my friends, we are like children - Bunyan would say, like chickens without the whole of the egg off their head - we are like silly children as if we knew nothing at all, because the truth is, when the Lord lays burdens on us, sets us lessons to learn, and then draws us to Himself for forgiveness, and for grace to bear the cross, and take up the burden and carry it in submission, when He does that, I say, this is the purpose He has in view, to exalt Himself as our Saviour. Yes, He is exalted in showing mercy. "And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you" I will draw them and they will come with their sins, come bending unto Christ, and pursuing Him, and beseeching Him, and pleading with the Father what His Son has done. They are drawn with their sins. No excuses, no

extenuations. The Adamic spirit gets many a death blow - "The woman Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me and I did eat". The Lord will take and knock that down if it rises up in you, over, and over, and over again. You wont say, I could not help it. You wont say, I was provoked. You wont say, this and that. We have been saying it, some of us, often, but what has the Lord done? Simply put it aside, knocked it down, and made it like Dagon, head and limbs gone. What for? That He may save us and that, seeing we are lost, we may struggle after Him to be saved by Him.

And they come for something. O, yes, they come for something. A full man may admire a well laid table, but appreciate it, he could not. And people may admire the doctrine of salvation, but appreciate it they cannot; it is impossible. But when people are lost, empty, and needy, and poor, then they are in a position, and a condition, to appreciate what Christ has to give. One sings - what a truth it is; O, what a truth it is; may we believe it

Christ has blessings to impart
Grace to save thee from thy fears
O, the love that fills His heart
Sinner, wipe away thy tears

Christ is the Friend of sinners. We are not half willing to be sinners. We are not half willing to be saved by grace. He makes us so. He will make all His children willing. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" and then they come. It is a great thing to glory in this, that we shall owe Christ most. Yes,

Yet would I glory in the thought
That I shall owe Thee most

Great is the grace that is poured on a sinner in that measure that enables him to say that he is glad to be plunged daily deeper, and deeper, and yet deeper into the debt of Jesus Christ. He comes for forgiveness, for justification, for sanctification, for nourishment, for the bread of life, for the water of life, for the healing of grace. O, a sight of Christ is seeing a river, pure river of water of life, clear as crystal. It is seeing the tree of life

whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and whose fruit is for nourishment month by month. It is seeing life, and righteousness, and holiness, all in Him, and for these great things poor people come; they come for them. I will draw them. All men, all conditions of men, I will draw unto Me. I will draw them to Me for grace to bear their afflictions. The Apostle Paul got this drawing. He had a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, and how to carry it he did not know. So away he goes to the throne of grace, and asks the Lord again, and again to take it away. At last the dear Saviour came to him and said, "My grace is sufficient for thee", which was the same thing as saying, No, Paul, you must carry this; you must live with it; it is to be your companion; it is to let out your pride, and the blood of your own strength. It is to exhaust you in yourself; it is to make you a poor dependant on myself. My grace - not your fortitude; My grace - not your resolution to be a man; but My grace, this is sufficient for you. And O, the sweetness of that to him overcame the bitterness of his trouble. Yes, the bitterness of death was past, the bitterness of the cup was taken away by the exceeding sweetness of grace, sufficient grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee". Then said Paul, So be it Lord. I will glory in mine infirmity, I will glory in my weakness, I will be glad to be in the dust, glory to be the least of all saints, glory to bear this for Thy sake. That was what he got. He went for it, and got it. He was drawn to the throne of grace and he got what he went for, grace, grace, grace. Ah, in his measure then, there was a shouting in his heart - "Grace, grace unto it" "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." We do need it, and sometimes it comes to pass that God sends particular troubles, and then particular grace is needed to believe. Sometimes God works great wonders by great troubles. One of the wonders is this, you will see, in the light of affliction, your own exceeding sinfulness, and unworthiness. Then you will stand amazed that you have so little trouble - not that you have trouble, but that it is so little - and you will enter into Paul's word - "Our light affliction which is but for a moment". The very thing that you thought you could not bear, that you said you would not bear, was light. That is one of God's wonders, and it makes you say, I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. I am as a man that heareth not, as a man in whose mouth are no reproofs. Grace meekens the spirit, grace softens the heart,

grace brings you to your senses, grace brings you to look at yourself, and then to Christ. In a sense, and way, it is lost sight of, and you are a sinner. Another wonder is this, that the Lord Jesus who draws you to Himself, lets you see that He is with you, and His presence surrounds you. He is your protector, your provider, your friend, your helper, and this sweetens the bitterness of trouble, this enlivens your spirit, this sweetly brightens your hope, powerfully sustains your spirit, and you can say, I will bear this trouble. You say it in the spirit of sweet submission to the holy will of God. I will deliver these people and they shall find some things here which I have only time to name without at all entering into them. You shall find justification, sanctification, reconciliation, communications from God, and then you will let out your whole heart to Him. You will find satisfaction, you will find delight, you will find protection, you will find provision, you will find a promise of heaven. The cross is everything, and it will bring you to the spirit of the Apostle Paul who said - "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." Then you will say - Close to the ignominious tree, bound by holy love's resistless chain, you would like to live, and die. (1052). O that God would bring us to this.

AMEN.