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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 7 January 1923

JOHN 12 V 32

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

This gracious word is being continually fulfilled. Christ is, from time to time, making it good, is being exalted by His Spirit in sinners' hearts, and this is an infinite mercy for all in whom Christ is doing it. There is much for us to be drawn away from and much to be drawn to, and it could only be accomplished by Christ dying. So we have, first of all, as enabled, to notice the death of Christ. "This spake He, signifying what death He should die", that He should die an ignominious death. He, the Lord of glory, the ever blessed, true, proper Son of God, the true, pure Son of Man, having no sin, and doing no sin of His own, and Himself, still He had imputed to Him the sins of His people and so He had to suffer death, and what a death it was. In Isaiah we are told "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief." We have no standard in our nature that can at all realise or enter into, or sympathise with, this great wonder, because our love is of that nature to seek, by all possible means, to shield from pain and suffering and sorrow all who are dear to us, so that there is no standard even in a pure nature for this. But here is the eternal God, and the greatest commendation that He gives of His love is that He spared not His own Son. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." O poor sinner, think of it. And when the Father bruised Him and put Him to grief then the love of God had its greatest vent; the justice of God had its highest satisfaction; the holiness of God received its most wonderful honour; mercy had opened for her the most remarkable channel in which to flow to sinners. And this blessed Trinity in infinite love did all this in order to bring such wretches as we are unto Christ. "And I" said the Saviour "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The death of Christ was necessary for this. Without that wondrous death there could have been no attraction in God for us. We should all have been for ever and ever imbued with the spirit of

guilty Adam who, when he heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, went and hid himself. That is just what we should do, hide ourselves. We did; we flew to Sinai, we flew to our works, we flew to this and to that, and it is just natural to do so. But God won't have hell crowded and heaven empty of men; He will have some men to be with Him; He will be the Host of a number that no man can number. Ah sinner, if God put you there, if God put me there, everlasting thanks will be due to Him. We, as wicked as the worst of men, deserve to be banished from His presence and the glory of His power. Instead of letting that be, He sent His Son, lifted Him up, was pleased to bruise Him, to put Him to grief. O, if this were let down to us in the beauty and the greatness and the grace and the love of it, should we not dissolve in the sweetest contrition in a moment? Would it not affect our hearts and spirits to believe that the great God was pleased to bruise His Son instead of us, to put His Son to grief that He might make us happy, to put our sins on Him that we might have imputed to us His righteousness? This is wonderful and I wish the Lord would let it down into our hearts, that every living soul here might rejoice in this divine goodness, the goodness of God in bruising His dearly beloved Son and being pleased to do it. It would give us, if it were opened to us, the clearest and deepest view of the eternal love of God to us, that rather than we should suffer He would have His Son suffer; rather than we should have the strokes of divine justice and the bruising of the awful curses of God, these should fall on His dearly beloved Son; and that instead of our having them we should have the love of God, the grace of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and acceptance of our persons in Christ Jesus.

Now the attraction is very great. Christ is lifted up on the gospel pole; in the gospel ministry He is lifted up. I am sorry that I cannot lift Him up higher and better, but, as God helps me, I will just do it from time to time, a little, and if the Holy Ghost is in that little, you will find some attraction. Christ is attractive, and I will give you one or two reasons for this attraction and then, as enabled, speak of the power of that attraction as it is exercised on the soul by the Holy Ghost. And that will bring out this, how we, if it is so indeed, are drawn by Jesus Christ.

The attractions of Christ are these, first, His amazing

suitableness to us. Almighty God and very Man are suitable to us - One Person is suitable to us. In pity, in love, in grace, in forgiveness, in promises, in the Covenant, Jesus Christ is suitable. We need such a Person because we are sinners. Of course that is a very common saying, but it is a solemn thing, and felt, is exceedingly painful. But, as felt, it does make Jesus Christ suitable to us. What should I do without Him? What would you, who feel your sins, do without Him? Take this point in one particular. How would you venture to pray without the Man Christ Jesus? How would you dare to hope apart from the death of Christ? How could you open your mouth before God without the High Priest? O, is not it wonderful? If you are half as guilty in your feelings as I am in my feelings, you would soon sink into despair if Jesus Christ were blotted out from your view. You could as soon live and be lively without the atmosphere, as you could live before God and speak before God without Jesus Christ. Then is it not wonderful? O, how suitable He is. I cannot express it to you what sometimes I feel in this suitableness of Jesus Christ. I dare say some of you could join with me if I were to say some of the streets of Brighton, certain places if they could speak, would say this, how they heard us groan out to God our confessions of sin, and how we, at those moments, felt Christ is the Friend of sinners, and needed by us, and suitable to us; suitable in a degree never, never to be measured by us.

He is suitable in the next place, exceedingly suitable, in that He is the very Throne of Grace. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace". This is that glorious high throne of which Jeremiah speaks "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary"; a Mediator. The infinite God shining in His perfections, in His glorious holiness, and in that shining forbidding us to come near to Him. Ah, then there intervenes Jesus Christ and He, and God in Him, says "Come to Me", and come boldly. Though your sins make you shy, and they make you tremble and fear, come boldly. Though Satan says, you will have nothing of a welcome, but only be repelled, He says, "Come boldly". Though your heart may, in its native enmity, rise up against Him, yet He says, "Come boldly" In this, what is there shut out? All kinds of need, all kinds of sin, all fears and temptations, come with them all.

Come boldly to the throne of grace
Ye wretched sinners come

And now that is a wonderful suitableness in Jesus Christ, so that the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind, these, these are invited, and these receive a welcome. Sinner, do you find this throne of grace attractive to you? The very name attracts a sinner sometimes - the throne of grace; the throne of favour, free favour, gracious favour, divine favour, bestowed upon the worst of sinners, this attracts, sweetly attracts those to whom the Holy Spirit is pleased to open the matter.

Then the suitableness of Christ also is seen here, namely in His power. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins". How could He, if He were not omnipotent? And if He were only, and nakedly, omnipotent, how could He save us? But the Man, Christ Jesus, has this almighty power. God and Man, one Person, omnipotent to save, omnipotent to snatch a burning brand from the fire, to rebuke an accusing devil who is accusing a sinner clothed with filthy garments. Omnipotent to heal the soul that is sick of sin; to remove sin's guilt and filth and break its power. This is an attraction of our Lord Jesus Christ. It would not be long before I was lost and in despair, but for this omnipotence of Christ. The power of sin is such that, but for Christ's omnipotence, no efforts, no tears, no desires, no prayers, could save us from the power of our sin. No, nor from the curse of the law. Omnipotent in providence too, and this is wonderful. If God the Spirit should open to us that Scripture - "All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth", it would make Christ more wonderful than ever to us. O what is beyond the reach of His power? What untoward providence is He not managing? What painful circumstance is He not dealing with?; and how in all of them, and through all of them, He will bring good to His people.

And further, another word on this point; how suitable He is in His blessed Word that sets forth His characters. The Shepherd to look after His sheep. A refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble. A Friend, a Brother born for adversity. An Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And the Word of God is full

of all these beauties which, as opened by the Spirit, become powerful attractions to the soul. If I be lifted up in these things, if I am lifted up above men and their diseases and their sins and their fears and their guilt; if I be lifted up when they are bitten of serpents, are dying from the rankling poison; if I be lifted up and draw their eyes to Me, then they shall come. I will draw them to Me.

In the next place, a few words upon the attraction. There is a power, a real power in an uplifted Christ exercised upon a poor sinner and it has that effect in his soul that is here expressed. "I will draw all men unto Me" and this is spoken of in Hosea where the Lord says "I drew them with bands of a Man, with cords of love, and I was unto them as one that taketh off the yoke from their jaw. I laid meat unto them." Now this is the moving of a soul to Christ. Let us see if we understand experimentally what this moving is. Here is a sinner - have I got the case here; let me try to speak of a case - Here is a sinner who is conscious of his sinfulness. He believes he deserves to be in hell; he feels that there are sins in him so powerful that if they were permitted to exercise their power in him they would soon utterly destroy him. He cannot lift his eyes up for shame. He is like the publican in that particular, as in other particulars; he is not able to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smites upon His breast. His case is a very bad one; he feels it is. Born bad, he has grown worse; he is full of evil; he is burdened with guilt. A thousand friends could not move him. No, now he is like a poor, dead, helpless creature. And there breaks in on his vision such a light, such a glory; Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in a moment, as it were, breaks upon his vision. He sees the sight, cannot shut his eyes to it, does not want to. It astonishes him, and as he looks his soul moves; as he looks his soul moves, and he goes to Christ. The secret of all proper motion Godward is here. "I will draw all men unto Me". Do you know what that is? This is one of the secrets of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. It comes; you cannot say, perhaps, how it came; could not say it came with any word perhaps particularly applied, but it came. You found the vision within you, the kingdom in your heart, the power in your conscience, in your affections, in your understanding, in your soul, and you began perhaps to reason, "Why should I cherish this poison? Why nourish these feelings of despair? Why do I believe that my case is hopeless.

Here is something bigger than my sin, something better than all creation; One suitable to me in a way I cannot express. Can prayer reach this One? Can my sinful soul send out a cry to this blessed One? Then the soul begins to try; "Lord save or I perish"; "God be merciful to me a sinner". That is the way and this, if I may so speak, this is the beginning of many steps toward heaven. And the sinner who takes the first step of this sort, however much and however often he sinks back, will never sink into hell; there is no place in hell for him who has taken this forward step toward heaven. "I will draw"; "I will draw all men unto Me". You may feel nothing but a piece of death itself, but you will be drawn to Christ whenever Christ lets the rays of His cross, the beams of His love, and some little inklings of His infinite merit fall upon your heart. You may be a long time before you reach Him to your satisfaction, but O, what a great thing it is to go to Christ like this. When you obey His call: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden", the obedience is the fruit of His drawing. He says: "Come", and like John, who heard a voice behind him and turning round to see the voice, he saw the Son of Man. O blessed sight. One day the sinner who gets this will sing with one of our hymn writers

O why did Jesus show to me
The beauties of His face?
Why to my soul did He convey
The blessings of His grace?

'Twas because He loved my soul
Because He died for me
Because that nothing could control
His great, His firm, decree

Now I would like to encourage you who have got as far as this to hold on and to give the Lord no rest. What a great thing has been done for you, when you have had this attraction, this drawing to the Lord Jesus, and you have gone to Him and perhaps you have felt this - now I could cast a thousand souls on Him if I had them. Perhaps you felt this - I will venture, sink or swim. I will go; if He repels me I will go. If He says I am a dog, I will go. If He says, "It is not meat to give the children's bread to dogs", still I will go, and tell Him that

"the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table". "I will draw them" says Christ, and can He draw and a person not respond?

H
He draws by His resistless grace

Jesus draws the chosen race
By His sweet, resistless grace

They come with grace for grace. They come with faith that He may give them more faith. They come with hope that He may cause them to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. They come for bread because they are hungry; for water because they are thirsty; for perseverance because they feel too weak to hold on; and for the mighty and sweet persuasion of the Eternal Spirit that they are the Lord's and He is theirs. They come with their troubles; having come with their sins, they come with their troubles, and having a good many of them; yes, they have a good many of them. Christ's Word is to be true in experience: "In the world ye shall have tribulation". The pressure comes; you cannot get away from it, but you do get relief in it, and that is a great thing. When one trouble ends, another will seize you, but the Saviour will never fail you. No; O, if I could only encourage you here by telling you that in a long life of profession I have found this to be true. Though troubles have come and gone, they have not left me altogether without some profit, because of this great One coming and saying "Come to Me". You will go to Him when you are in the fire and when you are in the water. When He lays affliction on your loins you will go to Him because His attractions will be such as that you must go. It is just like that; you must go. As if the child, having had many, many experiences of a parent's tender care and love could keep away. When new troubles come, you cannot keep away from the Lord. Faith in your heart, faith in Him, will cause you to go to Him. You say: "Lo glad I come; glad I come" O you will be glad to get away from yourself. You will be glad often, whenever you get it, you will be glad to get away from yourself for an hour, even less. When you are hating yourself and He causes you to come by His attractions, how glad you are. You could not express the sweetness there is in being relieved for a moment from the pressure of indwelling sin and then, also, from the pressure of some

trouble. You do not get rid of it, but you are relieved. You do not throw it away, but you get relief in it and you are enabled to say: "I think the Lord will see me through it. I think He won't let it really hurt me; that I shall gain by this, that it will turn to the furtherance of the gospel in my soul". What a kind and gracious Lord He is. Sometimes you will be so affected by His kindness and graciousness as to wonder that anybody should hate Him, but then, at another time, I do not wonder at men hating Him - men who are ignorant of Him - for my nature is just as bad as it used to be; there is no improvement there; only faith brings in a good report of Him, and then you go to Him. "I will draw all men unto Me".

He draws them unto Him for several particular things. Now let me mention one or two. He draws them to Him for nourishment, for the bread of life. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life". If you have faith it needs nourishment. If you have love, if you have hope, if you have humility, if you have patience - and born again, you have all these graces in your heart - they must be nourished, else they will languish. Who can nourish them? Not yourself, but the Lord. And as He nourishes these graces, then you can build yourselves on your most holy faith. The most holy faith on which you can build yourselves is the blessed doctrine of faith. The grace of faith being nourished will cause you to do that. Every grace must be nourished by its Author, and particularly faith is mentioned in the Scripture in this way. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. And when you see Him as the Bread of Life, what a drawing to Him there is, is not there? You say, O for a crumb of mercy; for a little of the Lord's kindness to be bestowed upon me. You go to Him, being drawn. "I will draw all men unto Me". And you will be drawn also that you may have more intimacy with Him. Take this solemn consideration for a moment, namely, that God and a sinner could never be intimate on law grounds; never. Could our tears for ever flow they could not bring us into intimacy with God. Who can; what can? The blood of Christ, the grace of Christ, the Person of Christ. God is in Him. O, if your eye sees God, if your heart feels Him, if you get a little attraction now and again to Him, then you say, now I would like to be nearer to Him and have more attraction and more communion with Him; to learn His secrets, to know His mind and to feel that I have a place in His heart

and that He will never leave me nor forsake me. "If I be lifted up". The Scriptures lift Him up; you see Him there sometimes do not you? You who read the Scriptures with enlightened eyes, do not you sometimes see Him there? Now in the Psalms, then in some Prophet, then in the Gospel; what a sight it is. O what a sight, the sight of Christ is when you get that sight in Holy Scripture. Sometimes, when that has not been in your hand at the moment, the Spirit lifts Him up. Perhaps when you are in prayer, perhaps when you are calling on the Name of the Lord, there comes sweetly falling upon your heart some gracious intimation of Christ and your soul, to put it as Berridge does, in a moment your soul is in your ears, and you begin to feel almost as if you can say: "The voice of my beloved; Behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." It is Jesus Christ, and what do you feel? Why, you go out to meet Him; you go out to meet Him. Affection goes out; hope goes out; faith goes out; love goes out; fervent desire goes out to meet the Lord and you can say then: Come in, thou much desired guest. I come to Thee and ask Thee to come to me and bring Thine own furniture with Thee, and Thy train to fill the temple. "I will draw all men unto Me".

Then - I must be brief this evening - then there is this. He attracts you to Himself as the only One who can bring you to a good end, who can give you a good finish. "I have finished my course" said Paul. How can you finish your course well, without Jesus Christ? The end is not far from some of us; our days tell us that. Now to finish well. "He will keep the feet of His saints; none of their steps shall slide". O, but that river death that parts eternity from time with respect to us. That river; we must cross it. If you get a sight of the Ark of the Covenant, of Him, that is to say, in whose heart is the law, and who fulfilled it, then you will even be drawn that way. O to finish well; what a mercy it will be to finish well our race. "I have drawn thee". They shall see that their strength to come off more than conquerors is Himself. The Lord, the strength of Israel, is the strength, the only strength that can carry us through, that can give us a good end, an honourable finish, and lay us well in the grave.

Sometimes He is lifted up in the ministry, and this is what I wish, particularly in these my last days of speaking, might be the case with me. I seek Him for it and ask that He may so bless me in the

preaching that you might find an attraction in the Lord Jesus; that when you come weary, sick of self, sick of sin, sorry for sinning; as you do, you might find Him lifted up so as to draw your heart's best affections to Him; so as to bring forth that sweet faith that will rely on Him and Him alone.

There is a wonderful attraction in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If you feel your heart empty of Him and have an attraction to Him, you will find one day that He will fill the empty place. He fills all things, and He is so good as never to turn away a poor creature. "He filleth the hungry with good things", such things as He has. Mercies, favours, love, pardons, pity, compassion, power, helps sufficient for the case, words suitable to sinners, encouragements suitable to those who are cast down. These are some of the things which He draws His people to. He draws them from themselves; He draws them to Himself; He draws them from their guilty fears and brings them to Himself who is their confidence. He draws them from their ignorance to Himself as the light of life and God only wise. Men hated Him and so did we and so should we to the end but for this; He draws, and His drawing is a drawing of love. "I drew them with cords of love". Eternal love, dying love, sufficient love, sweet love and this love He lets down as powerful, irresistible cords, and therewith draws His children to Himself. May the Lord make this out to us. I am thankful I do not speak to people, all of whom are totally ignorant of this, and I would be glad if the Lord should cause some of you, who may not have felt these attractions, so to feel your need of Him as to fit you for these attractions, for, as you are fitted for them by ruin and sin and guilt, so, when He lets down these attractions, you will feel the power and the sweetness and the suitability of them. May the Lord bless you and you will be blessed for "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow therewith".

AMEN.