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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 4 January 1920

JOHN 3 verses 14 and 15

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"

Individually and as a congregation we have much to thank God for this morning. We have entered on a new year and if we look back, even though we may have been afflicted, we shall see, that is to say if we have a right sight and true light, we shall see that there is much more to give thanks for than there is to complain about. Indeed truly we have nothing to complain about except sin. God has been good to us individually, has brought us on thus far, has not permitted us to make, as concerning faith and a good conscience, shipwreck; has not allowed us to turn away from the form of sound words, and this is much to be thankful for in this day. In providence He has been kind to us, giving us daily bread, feeding us, as the word is, with food convenient for us, and giving to us kind friends. To the young I would say you have much to be thankful for, for homes, for right influences, for an open Bible, for the health you have had, and the blessings of God's kind providence; you have much to be thankful for. Thankful for family life, O it is a great blessing, and I think never should it in the past, never could it have, appeared to be so great as today it must appear to all who have right feeling when the old fashioned family life is departing very much from the land, and all that that used to characterise families is rapidly, so to speak, melting away. You ought, you who have right influences about you in your family, you ought to be very thankful for such mercies and do not forget them and do not follow the present fashion, do not speak disrespectfully of parents when you are out of their sight. Try not to associate yourselves with people who would lead you to think lightly of parental authority and family influence. Keep away from all such things. Keep away from bad reading, endeavour to follow that

which is good. If you must read, read history, read church history, above all read your Bibles. You have them still. Eschew novel reading, eschew that that invades the mind, inflames the imagination and leads away from all good, moral, solid feeling. Eschew all that kind of reading and follow that which is sober and steady. Plenty of books there are still of a kind to do you good morally speaking; look for them; read them. Be thankful for your mercies, be thankful for any associations of a sort that are good, that have an influence upon you for good. Young people, you are in danger, and let an old man warn you, you are in danger. God keep you, God keep you from danger. The danger of frivolity is very great; the danger of infidelity is very great; the danger of a sensuous religion, ritual, here and there is very great and the danger of that broad critical view that brings the Bible under its scrutiny to criticise it, to find fault with it, that danger is very great. Tis rife in schools; alas for the schools, alas for the teachers, and alas for the taught, it is rife in schools. Now I do pray God may keep you from all these evils, my dear young friends. I am glad to see you here and may I not have the sorrow of seeing you depart and depart from the form of sound words in which you have been brought up; the Lord have mercy on you. I say again, as a congregation we have much to be thankful for but that which, above all else, calls for thankfulness is this Book, the Bible, God's revelation of Himself, and that in this Book which, above all other subjects, which absorbs other subjects so to speak, which gives them form, beauty and glory, is that Person who speaks of Himself in the text; to Him I would direct your attention.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." This is true, namely we are hastening to the tomb; time is carrying us along; it is unperceived by us, in many cases, and especially when we are young we do not think about the swift passage of time and how that we are being carried along, but it is so. Whether we think it or not, whether we are exercised about it or not, it is so, and the day is coming, is not very distant, when the place that knows us now will know us no more, and there is an eternal life given to a determinate number of the fallen children of Adam and there is a way to that life and the way to it the text tells us of, and if you will give me your attention, and the Lord

will grant me His help, I shall speak to you of this great matter in the first place, sin, and in the second place speak of the great remedy. Sin - You cannot have read your Bibles without observing that sin occupies a very large part of the sacred volume. It is so abominable to God that He continually warns against it. The commission of it is so offensive to Him that He continually shows His anger and punishes men, and in these ways a very large part of the holy Scripture is occupied with sin. We may be sure it is terrible in God's eyes, offensive above all description, when He should present it so continually and set it forth in its blackness, in its wicked and hell deserving nature. We have a particular instance of it in connection with the text. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" You will all remember the solemn and sad circumstances of the making of a serpent of brass by Moses and the lifting of it up in the wilderness. The children of Israel were travelling, going to the land of promise. They had just had a victory in answer to prayer, and then they had to take a further journey and they got discouraged. The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And instead of seeking the face of God for new courage they, as all men do, as we do, they fell to murmuring and their murmuring took a most definite and awful shape. They committed, as I judge, the greatest sin of all the sins of their journeyings, at that time; they murmured against the Lord and against Moses and they also said that their soul loathed the light food which was daily, in much mercy, rained upon them from heaven, the manna, and inasmuch as the manna is a very lively type of the Lord Jesus, their murmurings were against Him in reality. He was with the church in the wilderness; He preserved the church, fed her and now they murmured against Him and this was so provoking in the eyes of God's glory as that He sent fiery serpents, bid them poison them, and many of the people died. Ah let me say here what a grievous sin is the sin of murmuring against Christ. The Apostle Paul takes it up in the Corinthians and says - "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer". (1 Corinthians 10 v 10). Murmuring against providence is dreadful, but murmuring against Christ is terrible in the extreme. Murmuring against that light food as they called it, was murmuring against the specially instituted providence of God in raining bread from heaven for them every day. And they came to Moses being bitten with the confession that they had sinned and with the petition that

the Lord would cause the serpents to cease from among them. And Moses prayed for the people and the Lord answered him and said, make a serpent like the serpents that bite the people and rear it high, lift it up on a pole and it shall come to pass when a man is bitten and he shall look to this, then he shall be healed. So Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole and set it up and thus it came to pass that whenever a man was bitten of a serpent he looked and saw that brazen serpent erected, set on high by Moses, and the sight brought healing to his afflicted and poisoned, affected body. This was the type and, says the Lord Jesus Christ, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" - as serpents destroyed, so shall a serpent bring deliverance and life - "so must the Son of man be lifted up", set on high, in order that poor, bitten sinners, feeling their bite and the poison injected into their souls, the poison of sin and death, coming, looking to this Lord Jesus shall find eternal life. May God give us to feel our bite; may He give us to look to the Lord Jesus. You will not look to Him till you feel the bite and the poison, and if you feel them, then O what a mercy you will feel it to be in time that there is one lifted up to whom, guided by the Spirit, you may and shall cast a believing look and find eternal life. In what sense are we to understand the lifting up of Christ? First the manner of the death that He died. As in this gospel, further on, Christ says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This spake He signifying what death He should die." He was literally lifted up from the earth and crucified on the accursed tree. It was no common death; a death that all should view; He was made a spectacle to God and to men. It was no common death, my friends, that Christ died. It was a death with a curse in it, the death that God the Father inflicted on God the Son, Jesus Christ. It was the death inflicted by the law. Death inflicted by men, O how trifling was that comparatively, but the death inflicted by the Father, by the law, O this was death, and this is in the first place what we are to understand by this being lifted up and when faith looks at Christ dying, Christ crucified, O then life comes, liberty is given sooner or later in some measure. You must first feel the bite and the poison of sin, feel death rankling in you, feel that you are lost before you can value this uplifted Jesus Christ. One of the greatest evils you will find in the religious world is a religion without conviction of sin, a gospel that does not displace and succeed the law. It is a

fearful thing to be religious and have no conviction of sin. There may be a feeling of it, there may be a great deal of talk about it, but the conviction of it, the sound penetrating, killing conviction of sin is wanting in many cases. May the Lord grant it may not be lacking in us. "To see sin smarts but slightly". To see, in your mental vision, a hell that you may even conjure up into your feelings, wont save you, but to feel sin, and to feel the sorrows of death and to be compassed with the pains of hell, this, this will, if I may so speak, qualify you to look to Jesus Christ. The measure of this feeling the Lord orders in His sovereignty; the necessity of it is clearly seen in the scheme of salvation. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Strictly there are no people righteous; there is not a righteous man on earth. So when Christ said, "I came not call the righteous", He must have intended this, I came not to call people who esteem themselves righteous. But sinners, who esteem themselves sinners, these I came to call, these I came to save. And in that light Hart speaks a true word when he says - "A sinner is a sacred thing, the Holy Ghost has made him so". A sinner is a man who is wrong, a man who, knowing that he is a sinner, can make no pretention to goodness; who, seeing his sin and feeling it, is ashamed of himself. Seeing what he is capable of he says of the worst of men, I could be that man if God did not preserve me; I could do these things if God did not prevent me. I am the man. And such a person would not like anyone to think him a Christian sometimes and he would say, No, I have no claim on the Lord, no claim to that sacred Name. I am a sinner; I am a real sinner; not a fancied one, I am a real sinner, and to this man God will look, does look, and this man shall have given to him power to look to Christ lifted up, that is Christ dying. What does the death of Christ mean? It means that He was made a curse, being made sin. It means that He fulfilled, He magnified the law and made it honourable, and it means this, hearken poor sinner, if your distraction will allow you, hearken, it means this, that there is now a new and living way open to God, not for the righteous, but for sinners. It means that without the removal from yourself by yourself of any one single thing, any single sin, any speck and spot of guilt, there is for you, a sinner, an opened, a new and living way; that is to say, there is given liberty to a wretch to come to God. O what would some of us do but for this truth? This is what the death of Christ signifies; and further that every poor creature in trouble, soul trouble, providential

trouble, trouble of temptation, has this blessed liberty given to him to go to the God of all grace for mercy, for life, and for every good thing needed. The lifting up of Christ may and does no doubt further mean in the Spirit His exaltation after His humiliation. Because He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess. Ah what a mercy it is to have grace to bow the knee to Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". O what a blessing this gospel is to many poor people. They must confess, they do confess, God gives them power to confess, and it is written - "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is in heaven; He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, at the right hand of the Father, an Intercessor, ever living to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. I have spoken of it before, but I would just like to name it again, that salvation, the power of Christ to save, God the Holy Ghost, in that passage puts in His intercession. "He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. "And this is wonderful for dumb people - "Open Thy mouth for the dumb" it is said to Him in the Proverbs in the spirit of prophecy. "Open Thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction." Open Thy mouth, plead the cause of the poor and the needy. And then you know near to that passage is this, "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish" and this is the gospel. Strong drink to revive the fainting soul; strong drink to bring that heavenly exhilaration that alone can come from the gospel. O what a Christ there is lifted up. God lifted Him up. He brought Him from the grave; He was taken up into heaven after He had shown Himself to be alive to His disciples by many infallible proofs and there He is, ever living, ever loving, ever ruling, ever watching, ever taking care of His children. Ever ready and ever willing to save and bless them and He says to them in the Spirit - "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour". Why my brethren, the sight is wonderful, a risen, an exalted Saviour. One says - "Look ye saints, the sight is glorious". Some here may say, we are not saints. Then I would say, "Look ye sinners, the sight is glorious", a living,

a precious Christ exalted at the Father's right hand to intercede. He is lifted up. We might say too that Christ is intended to be lifted up in the ministry. The minister is to follow the Scriptures; the Scriptures lift Christ up so to speak; they know no other subject. This is the one great remedy that God has provided. This is the one sound He will have sounded in the pulpit, that Christ is the friend of sinners. O the pleasure this gives to a believing heart sometimes, Christ is the friend of sinners. The sound is a quickening sound, an encouraging sound, a drawing sound. When your ears catch it, that is the ears of your faith catch the sound, you will follow it. O that I knew this Christ. The sound will draw your heart, will draw your eyes to an uplifted Christ. Now as the Scriptures lift Him up so, so it is intended that the ministry should lift Him up. What cause of shame one has that He has been so little lifted up by one. There is no other subject worthy of mention. You remember the Apostle Paul was so taken with this, so filled with this, that he said to the Corinthians - "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Who can tell but those who feel it, what a moving of heart there is sometimes at the sound of the gospel, that sometimes men can say as it is in our hymn book - "Delighted, we've heard its contents" (Gadsbys 460). Here are God's mercies, God's kindness, tenderness, love, bowels of compassion, pardons innumerable, justification eternal, sanctification unalterable, heaven made sure in the Person of Christ, and the ministry is to lift Him up. Bid the bitten look unto it; life attends every look. This is a great thing. Exercised people really want this in the ministry. There is nothing else to entertain them. The ministry will tell people this is the only remedy for every case that men can come into who fear God. Temptation, the devil himself who shall be bruised shortly under the feet of the saints by God Himself. Deliverance from a backsliding state, revival when you are low, a fresh quickening when you feel dead, a new moving of the Spirit on the face of your confused souls. The only remedy preached in the word and set forth in the ministry sent of God, the only remedy, is this the very Person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May the Lord grant it may be the one thing with me and that your hearts may be affected by it in the power of the Eternal Spirit.

And in the next place Christ is to be lifted up by the Holy

Ghost, and this is no fancy of man but a promise of Christ's. He says, promising the Holy Ghost, as we are told in this gospel, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". He shall lift Him up; He shall make you see Him. You look sometimes within: O the confusion there is there, the sin you feel, the guilt that you sink under, the sins that you fall into, the bitter things you see, the wrong things you act in your hearts. You look there and there is nothing but desolation. How is this desolation to be taken away? How will your waste places be repaired? The Holy Spirit alone is the one who shall do this and He shall do this by taking of Christ's things, Person, work, death, burial, resurrection, ascension into heaven, intercession there; Christ's fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. He shall glorify Christ. Everyone who gets the view of this takes some notice of it. He may afterwards forget it, or may think it was not given to him by the Lord the Spirit, but the view given has for the time an effect. It makes the man who gets it say to himself

Why should I then poison cherish
Why despair of cure and perish
Look my soul though stung to death

It thus gives a heavenly courage to a fainting sinner. It draws the heart as effectually as the summer sun draws up the virtue of the earth into the tree. It has an effect. It stops despair; it is wider than a sinner's case, it penetrates beneath his sin and sinfulness, it tells him that there is no cause of despair where Christ is; that Christ is the remedy, the Saviour, the only Saviour. I am God, beside Me there is no Saviour. The Spirit lifts Him up. O what a precious Christ He then becomes, and it is in this way that that takes place which John mentioned in respect of himself and of Christ. "He must increase but I must decrease". I, in my legal self, in my wishes to get rid of this by my own hand, in my design to get rid of some of my sins, to make myself fit to pray, I must decrease. My reputation must go, my Pharisaism must go; I must go down into a nothingness and be a poor, wretched sinner, that Christ in His Person and in His work may increase in my esteem, in the eye of faith and in my affections. He is to be lifted up thus. As the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up. This would

answer many a question as, for instance, one might say I am so ignorant, how shall I know Him? There are so many false Christs how shall I distinguish Him from any and all of them? I am so ignorant, I do not know, I am afraid. There are mock suns are there not, so called? There is only one sun to us, only one sun to our earth and when that sun arises all the pretended lights, all the influences that come from every natural and every other source will die away. How do we know that now at this moment our sun is shining? His rays come through the window. And how will you know if the very Christ of God shines on you? By the powerful light and influence and life and hope and peace and comfort according to the measure of the revelation you will feel. It may not reach joy; it may not reach peace; it will penetrate into your despairing feelings; it will penetrate into your limiting of the Holy One. It will tell you that there is more grace in Christ, more merit in Christ, than there is sin in you, than there is guilt in you, and it will say, despair not. It will say this, it will preach this gospel in you.

Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him
This He gives you
Tis His Spirit's rising beam

He must be lifted up. He came to be lifted up. He was humbled; He humbled Himself. Men hated and persecuted Him but He was His Father's only begotten Son and His Father's dear, devoted Servant. He was the sacrifice, He was the Priest, and now, having done all His Father sent Him to do, He is lifted up. O that ministers, O that I, a poor one indeed, might have power and wisdom to lift this Christ up.

Now in the next place let us enquire into some of the particulars in respect of which He is to be lifted up. Let us not deal - if the Lord will prevent us - let us not deal in generalities, let us deal in particular things. I like points. There are many points of infinite importance to us with respect to the lifting up of Christ and one is this, His very Person as Emmanuel is to be lifted up. Yes, He is to be seen to be "God with us". Not a Man only, a very Man but not only a

Man; Very God also; One Person. O my friends, the mystery of all the mysteries of our holy religion and the mercy of all the mercies of our holy religion you have in the Person of Jesus Christ. When faith sees Him she knows Him. Job, speaking of his past greatness said - When the eye saw me it bore witness unto me; when the ear heard me it attended to me. I do not quote literally but that is just what he had in his heart and mind to say. He was somebody, that is he was eminent among the people in his day. He was one to be noticed and so I will say when Jesus is lifted up who is like Him? There is none like Him and faith says - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee". Whom have I to plead? Whose blood can I mention? Whose righteousness can I speak of? Whose power can I plead with the Father? Whose grace can I look to but Thine? Whom have I in heaven to go to, to hang upon, to wait for, but Thee. Does that find an echo in you my friends? Is He the One of all others to whom you would go? O look to this Person. It is to be feared that the knowledge of Christ's Person has almost died away today from this land and from professors, and surely we could not retain that knowledge a minute, if we possess it even, without the Lord. May He increase it in our judgement and in our love

None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good

None can guide them into the way everlasting; none can give them peace; none protect them from dangers; none save them from sin; none deliver from guilt, but Jesus. None present to His Father and theirs but Jesus. None can bring them honourably through their trials and make them a blessing, make pain a good thing and sickness a rich mercy but Jesus Christ. He can do all things. Who can give us uprightness of heart but that blessed one who said, A new heart and a right spirit will I give to you. O what a Christ He is. Do you wonder that they sing in heaven - "Worthy is the Lamb" Do not you sometimes try to join them, some of you, lisping as well as you can to His praise and honour, none but Jesus can save me; none but Christ can lift me out of this low place, revive me from my present darkness and death. None can bring me nigh but Christ, none make me acceptable, but Christ. None but Jesus. He must be lifted up as to this great, wonderful matter, namely His very Person. Let me say to you once more, the Person of Christ is antecedent to all the other blessings of

the gospel. He is before all; He is the substance and the fullness of all. All pardons, justification, sanctification, they all follow His Person. He is first, He is prominent, He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. He is to be lifted up as to His precious infinite merit; His infinite merit is to be preached, all men are to hear this, that the blood of Christ can cure a sin sick soul, can wash out the black stains of sin, can remove and kill the power and dominion of sin; infinite merit. What a gospel it is that sets forth this for sinners. If you feel sin to be powerful, if some particular sin struggles for the mastery in you, if often it gets the mastery, if you have to say, Lord I have fallen again by my enemy and I am afraid that one day I shall fall to rise no more by this, my enemy; if you have to say this, there is one who has infinite merit to remove both the guilt and the power of that very sin. There is a gospel promise which the soul sometimes, enlightened by the Spirit, reaches after - "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace. " But it is very discouraging to fall into it again and again and yet again; to pray to be delivered, to get a help and to think the Lord has heard you - and indeed it is so - then, after that, after you have humbled yourself, after you have felt He has forgiven you, after that again to fall into that very sin, and it is very solemn and very painful. What says the Lord concerning human forgiveness. How often shall I forgive my brother, if he trespass against me seven times? O no, says Christ, seventy times seven; go on forgiving. Will He say that to poor men, enjoining that on them and then do less Himself? O what a forgiving Christ He is. What merit He has to put away sin. Come poor sinner, come away from all your discouragements and fears, come away from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards and all those vile and dreadful and dangerous places you feel so often to be in, as says Christ to His Church. Come with Me, My love, come away, come from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards, come from where they lurk to destroy you, come with Me. He says, let us go into the villages, let us lodge in the fields and there will I give thee My loves. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." I will draw their eyes to My merit, I will draw souls to Myself and I will bless and save them.