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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Sunday morning, 28th. August 1927.

Text: John 4. v. 24

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him
must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

I will begin by using an old favourite formula of mine. True religion is two-fold - objective and subjective. If you have only an object, it may be a natural religion. The object may be creation. You may be a deist and be lost. If it be subjective only and you live in yourself; on yourself; on your fears, if you have fears; on your own apprehensions of what is right; you may be lost, but if you have the Holy Ghost in you, He will teach you who God is and what; who and what you are. You will worship God, hate yourself, cleave to Christ and follow Him with all your heart. True religion is both objective and subjective - without you, within you. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. One in nature, in power, in glory and He is the only true, proper Object of worship. A subjective religion is a worshipping religion; where the Holy Ghost is. A believing religion, a praying religion, a fruit-bearing religion. A cleaving to God under a sense of sin and need. A following the Saviour. A looking to the redemption and for the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. It may be very small in us. It is. We may know very little of God but if we know Him at all, He will be the Object, the only Object, and as the Spirit reveals Him in Christ, He will become "the chiefest among ten thousand" and the "altogether lovely" One. If the Spirit be in us, there will be such a subjective work, as will lead us to hate sin and self, to cry down this wicked thing 'self', to seek to have it under the foot of grace, to seek to be under the rule of King Jesus, to seek to be again and again brought nigh by His priesthood, to be justified in His righteousness, to be sanctified by His grace, to be guided by His Spirit and ultimately, to get to heaven. Such a religion has been beautiful to me, many-a-time. What an Object we have if we be under the teaching of the Spirit. What a God to look on; what a Saviour to cleave to; what a Spirit to teach us. The Trinity - The Holy blessed Trinity! O my brethren, I do wish the Lord would lead us more and more, as William Gadsby says in one of his hymns, "Out of self to Jesus lead!" He would then be to us all and in all. We have, as I judge, this religion implied in the text.

It is also in the law of God given to the Church in the wilderness. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It is in the gospel - "We are the circumcision," says the Apostle Paul, "which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Constantly did God remind His Church in the wilderness, of Himself. His justice must be appeased by that annual sacrifice. Their daring offences and backslidings must be acknowledged by the morning lamb and the evening lamb sacrificed. Their indebtedness to God must be acknowledged by the offering of meal, and the first-fruits of the land must be waved before Him. All this says

there is a grand, a great and an ultimate Object before you. This is the God you must worship. He is the God who shall be your Object and your end. Dear friends, God, as God, is the only ground and motive and end of that religion which He gives to His people. Through their sins; through their fears; through the baptism of temptation that they all, more or less, experience; they come to this great end, this great motive, this great Object - God. In these latter days of my life I find, I trust, that this is the way my soul goes - panting after God. As the Scripture says, so I would find it, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:" and when as often is the case, I turn into myself, then I am in bondage. I fear, I am weak, I am confused; and only as by the Spirit led out of self, is there any steadiness of mind, any hope for eternity. And doubtless, I would say thankfully, doubtless it is so with many of you. We have the Object in our text. A sense of God sometimes wellnigh overwhelms the sinner to whom that sense is imparted by the Spirit. The Maker of heaven and earth; the Creator of the sacred human nature which the Son of God took into union with Himself, thereby becoming Emmanuel - God with us. The God of providence moving and working all things after the counsel of His own will. The God of love, loving the election of grace and sending His only begotten Son into the world, that that election of grace might live through Him. God, who sends His good Spirit into the Church in the wilderness to guide her into the truth; to reveal in her the Lord Jesus and to open that exhaustless supply of all that is needed for time and eternity and for life and godliness here. This is the God we adore. Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord. Happy is the people whose excellency is the Lord. Miserable in themselves, often exceedingly miserable in themselves, having notwithstanding, a good God to go to, and when they are not able to move toward Him, He draws them and when they are in a low place He comes to them and speaks to them. This is the God of our text.

"God is a Spirit." An infinite pure Spirit. Eternal, self-existent, independent, infinitely just, holy, living, glorious, jealous, good. O that I had a tongue here this morning, worthy and capable of setting out before you this great God. I believe I love Him sometimes, and want no other, but He is a great God. The Spirit. He subsists in three Persons. I hope if I never get tired of saying this, you will never weary of hearing it. May we be true humble believers in the Trinity, and that the Trinity bears three essential names. Names which do not describe their office, but their mode of subsistence, and that these Three are One! One in nature, there being no difference in nature. Hold that fast. Introduce into the second Person, human nature as essential to His Sonship, and you invade the Trinity and introduce into it that which will never be tolerated. Three co-equal, co-eternal Persons bearing these blessed, beautiful, essential names. Father - all that is proper to a Father; Son, and all that is proper to a Son; Holy Ghost proceeding from them both. This, this is the God we adore. The God we would follow. The God we would know. The God with whom we would dwell throughout eternity, and because of this greatness in God, He is worthy of all that spiritual attention we may be enabled to give. This God has been pleased, in infinite condescension, to make Himself known; reveal Himself, in this

blessed Book; this inspired Bible.

He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the first Person - the Father. The fountain of goodness. The fountain of election, eternal personal election, and the first person elected was the Person of the Son. "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." O sinner if you are to go to heaven, you will get, some day, a view of this God the Father in personal election, and as the first person elected was the Person of the Son, so you will find your person after Him elected in the Son. "Chosen ... in Him before the foundation of the world." Men speak of this doctrine as if it were harsh, unjust, whereas the truth of the matter is this - if there is any mercy to flow to any sinner, it must be by this purpose of God, choosing that sinner, so that it shall be said to that sinner - "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." They see Me and they see My Father in Me. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ gave grace to Christ, before the world began, for the Church. This the Apostle Paul teaches where he says to Timothy, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." What do you think of it? What think you of the Father, without beginning, without end? What do you think of His motion in eternity? All that emanates from the Trinity, when He chose His Son and chose for Him a bride and gave her to Him to be His wife.

The second Person is the Son of God, and the Father gave Him a commandment to go and lay down His life, but He must have a life to lay down. That life was prepared for, and given to Him, by the Holy Spirit, who did, in infinite goodness and power, beget that sacred human nature in the womb of the virgin. And the Son of God became Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, declaring His Father, sending His Spirit, fulfilling the law, magnifying it and making it honourable, laying down in obedience to His Father's commandment, His precious life. This is the Son, the Spirit, the infinite Spirit, in our nature. When we rightly worship God in Jesus Christ, we worship the Trinity.

The third Person is the Holy Ghost. The Creator of the human nature of Jesus; the Indweller in every saint; the Revealer of the Lord Jesus; the Sealer of the saint unto the day of redemption; the Earnest of the inheritance in the heart of the saint. This Holy Spirit! This Almighty God! One in nature. Sameness in nature - difference, only in Person.

Now this God is to be worshipped. Worship is a singularly beautiful state of the mind. It is adoration. The subjecting of a sinner to Almighty God - an infinitely inferior to an Infinitely Superior. An adoration of His Being, as that Being is revealed in holy Scripture, and to the soul, to the faith created. It is great to adore God. It is great to find your soul drawn out in acts of adoration. I believe that in the deepest conviction of sin that comes to a sinner by the Holy Ghost, and the solemn and heavy business of the sinner under the law, there is real worship of God in an acknowledgement of His

greatness and His justice and His glory. You may doubt a thousand times, about His love, but you will fall flat before Him, in an adoring wonder, now and again, at His greatness, and holiness, and justice and majesty. Without knowing it, in those days, my own beginnings - reflecting on them - I have perceived that there was this worship. Every time you justify Him in your condemnation, there is the very essence of adoration; of true worship. Every time you sink before Him in self-abhorrence, there is this worship. Every time you justify Him in any Scripture that comes to you to condemn you, there, is worship. O think of it as you may be enabled. Analyse your feelings when again and again you are brought to this adoring condition, and you will see that there, is true worship. He is to be worshipped. He will be worshipped. Ah, and there is adoration of Jesus. Have not some of us, over and over again said to Him - "I love Thy charming name?" How we have bowed before that name, containing as we have believed, all that our souls can possibly need and pray for; - that gracious Saviour. The Justifier of the ungodly; the Deliverer, out of Egyptian bondage, of all His own; the Atoner, appeasing Divine anger; exhausting the curse of the law due to the Church; laying down His life vicariously. What, O what an Object of worship He has been! And who that has felt the Spirit within him, has not worshipped that Holy Spirit? Loved Him, even as the Father has been loved, and as the Son has been loved. God is a Spirit and He is adored. And in worship, there is admiration; admiration of all that is beautiful and lovely and gracious in God as revealed in holy Scripture and brought home by the Spirit. The love of God, the grace of God, the goodness of God, manifested in the Lord Jesus and by Him. Admiration follows every sight of all that. Have not you admired Him sometimes? Have you not sometimes been suddenly caught away in your spirit wherever you have been and however engaged, with the thoughts of the beauties of God? His terror has not made you afraid. His goodness has drawn you and led you to repentance and though you have had thousands of fears about your acceptance, still your whole soul has, for the moment, been engaged in admiring the Person and the grace and the work of the Lord Jesus.

In worship, there is a prostration of soul. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker," and if I am not mistaken, I have kneeled many-a-time in walking about this town. You may have done the same. You have kneeled. Your heart has kneeled. Your judgement has kneeled. Your affections have kneeled. Your conscience has kneeled. Yea, you have kneeled before Him in that entire way that the Holy Ghost has brought you to. There, is prostration. It becomes us. It befits us in every way to prostrate our poor selves before the infinite and ever blessed God. He is great. "Great is our Lord, and of great power," and His people believe it. They worship Him in this way. In worship there are petitions, requests, confessions, waiting on this holy, holy, holy God. My friends, when we are in a good state of mind, we, so to speak, live in confession. Confessing unworthiness, lapses, backslidings, misgivings, limiting of the Holy One of Israel. Live in saying - we are unworthy and "Thou art worthy." Petitions for grace, for forgiveness, for justification, for holiness, saying again and again - 'I would be holy, I would

stand well before God and with Him. I would stand on the merits of the Saviour. I would stand on His blessed and everlasting righteousness and be justified therein.' And petitions for help in providence, for guidance - 'Do not let me take false steps.' "Leave me not, neither forsake me." Petitions to be kept from despair; despair that seems proper when you see honestly, for the time being, your sinfulness and your innumerable transgressions. Does not it seem proper to say, 'hell is my portion,' when you see yourself in that way? When you see yourself the blackest of creatures, the vilest of sinners, the most worthless of all worthless beings? Does not it seem, I say again, proper that you should sink into despair? But O, there is something that forbids despair. Have not you admired these words of Hart?

"Zion's mourners, cease your fear;
For lo! the dying Lamb
Utterly forbids despair
To all that love His name."

He is worshipped in petitioning, seeking, craving and panting after Himself. I wish the Lord would keep us at this business. Self-satisfaction, self-strength, self-wisdom; He only knows how frequently some of us are misled by. He only, knows the foolishness, the waywardness of the heart in the subtleties of self-righteousness, self-strength and self-wisdom. 'I would not do that!' says a child of God. 'I could not do that - I would not do that.' Ah, when the Spirit comes, as sometimes He does, or has done, in some of us, and lets us see the spirit underlying that - 'I could not - I would not;' what shame! I can say it for myself, what shame I have felt. O, the deceitfulness of sin is beyond our apprehension. God only, can make us know what sin is, and open to us in any measure the subtlety of it. Nowadays, if I hear one, in whom I believe there is grace, say, 'I could not do that,' I may almost in a moment say, 'now you are doing it.' In spirit you are doing it, and you have gone quite away from the Lord and turned your back on Him and turned yourself to yourself. O, beware of this self-confidence which shows itself and yet hides itself, when you are indignant about some sin of which you may have heard or which you may have seen, and should not this make us compassionate one to another? "Who maketh thee to differ from another" in anything that is good?

Worship is in prayer, and it is in asking for these things we feel to need. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." - "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto." Therefore, in this worship there is waiting. Waiting! Ah, it is easy when people have no case, to talk about waiting, but when two things are in you, waiting is difficult. When urgent need and seeming delay on God's part are in you, then you find waiting anything but easy. The watchman may say it is a cold night and the wind blows, I wish the morning would come, but his wishing does not hasten the morning. And you may find yourself wishing the Lord would come and perhaps you begin to judge Him wrongly because He does not come just as you think He should come. Wait on Him, and in waiting there is a spirit of acknowledgment of His wisdom, - He is too wise to err. An acknowledgment

of His might, - there are no difficulties with Him. When the moment comes, there He is. When the decreed purposes are accomplished, there He is. Wait on Him! What impatient creatures we are. Who would not rather wait on his own wisdom and admire his own schemes, especially if he is able to accomplish anything. Then he will sacrifice to his own net and burn incense to his own drag and say, by this his portion is made fat and his meat plenteous. But O, the man who does this wearies himself in the fire for nought.

In worship there is love. O how sweet it is to feel you love the Lord. What is it? A strange glow in your spirit. An inexpressible motion toward God of tenderness. Peculiar, beautiful regard to His character, to His names, His offices, His grace, His mercy, His righteousness, His goodness, His wisdom. I say these things in a breath, but O, it is a lifetime's business and exercise to work and walk them out. Blessed be God, for the love that has been felt sometimes in worshipping Him. Love is very beautiful. Natural love is. Spiritual love is especially beautiful, and it will come out sometimes in an hour of temptation when the enemy would blaspheme the Lord in your mind, then, up comes love. O, the grief that you have felt, that there should ever have been in your heart a thought against the Lord Jesus and against His Father and against His Spirit. He is worshipped. I believe the Psalmist worshipped Him when he used words which the Pharisee condemns. These words - "Do not I hate them, O Lord that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." In such a frame, who is first? God! In such a frame what is dearest? God! He is worshipped. We worship God.

When the angel had shown John the bride, the Lamb's wife and showed how that she had made herself ready and had said, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb," John having seen this wonder, fell down at the feet of the angel to worship him and the angel said, "See thou do it not. I am thy fellowservant, worship God." Pass His ministers by, pass angels by, pass by creation, pass by all miracles, all wonders, all wonders of God, all wonders of mercy too. Pass by all wonders wrought in you and all the grace given to you. Worship Him! Worship God! Hang on nothing, hold to nothing, follow nothing but this in your object - God. This is the grand object. This is the grand motive. This is the grand end.

Well now, dear brethren, I hope it may please the Holy Ghost to give us to perceive this, that we may cry to Him to teach us how to worship. In the prayer that Christ taught His disciples to pray, this doctrine is set forth. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Here is God. This is the adoring way of worshipping. This is the adoring love of the saint. This is the wonder of a poor creature, that God has spared his sin-forfeited life, raised him to a hope in the mercy of God by Jesus Christ, and brought him to feel after Himself. This is the worship. And good Rutherford is made to say, "I stand upon His merit, I know no other stand. Not e'en where glory dwelleth,

in Emmanuel's land."

"God is a Spirit," and He is not worshipped in the way that men have devised - gold, silver and precious stones. He was not worshipped by the Athenians, who had a religion and they reared an altar, but to a god they did not know, and Paul said to them - "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by I found an altar with this inscription, - to the unknown God." And then he began to declare to them who that God was. Worship Him. Worship Him in all things. Worship Him, by His grace, in His divine, glorious Being; in His blessed Son; in His good Spirit; in His holy providence; in His divine Word, His inspired Scripture; in the blessed worship of the saints in public: worship God. It is an amazing thing to be abstracted, even for a short time, from the things of this life, and to be detached from them and to have your soul attracted to God and enabled to worship Him.

One more word here. In this worship, there is trust, reliance. Dear friends, when you lean on your own poor arms, you fall into trouble, and everyone will say that, who has had that experience. You fall into trouble, into confusion, into weakness. Why, there is no child of God who wont believe what I say. When you lean on the Lord, when you trust Him, then you find what He says to be true - "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." But what when you are in the dark? Listen to what He says - "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" (no bright shining) "let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." - Who changes not. Who does not go up and down as our experiences do. "The same yesterday, and today, and for ever, is this adorable God of ours. This God - O may we say it in faith and in love -

"This God is the God we adore;
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as large as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end."

I hope the Lord will be pleased in His mercy, to make Himself in us the great Object; that we may have this good part of a saving religion, - an objective religion. An Object without us, - the eternal God. And then, that subjective religion, that certainly follows and makes up and ultimately brings the happy possessor of it to heaven. May the Lord help us and teach us and guide us in this. - "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."
