

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed  
Chapel Brighton on Sunday morning  
26 May 1929

Text: John VII verse 37

"In the last day that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and  
cried saying - If any man thirst, let him come  
unto Me and drink"

The murmuring and disputing which are recorded in this chapter concerning Christ do but express what has been taking place ever since the fall of man, ever since God proclaimed enmity, set it up as between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and this murmuring and disputing concerning Christ continue to this day, and God knows whether there be such murmuring and disputing concerning Christ in this congregation. If there be, for the murmurers and the disputers, if sovereign grace intervene not, a great day is coming when the thoughts of their hearts, when the evil utterances of their lips will be brought up against them, and solemn it will be for them to have had a being. Better for them not to have been born, than to have had a being, and have spent that being in enmity against the God of grace and love. If there be such people here, I would address an affectionate word to them, and beg that God would give them grace, give them to perceive the worth of their immortal souls, to perceive that the all-seeing eye of Jehovah is on them, to perceive that they are breaking the law, dishonouring the Saviour of sinners, that they are among those of whom it is written "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Oh dear friends you do not know your position. Some of us do know it, for we once were where you are. The worth of your precious souls, you do not understand. May the Lord give you grace to realise where you are, to feel what you are, to believe in God, to believe in a day of judgement, to believe that you are not fit to stand in that day before Him, and to believe that the just sentence of God will, if you die impenitent and unforgiven, burn against you in an endless eternity. There is a testimony in this chapter to Christ, very wonderful. The pharisees and chief priests, hearing

the murmuring and disputing that were being carried on concerning Christ, sent officers to arrest Him, to take Him and bring Him to them, and these officers had doubtless been arrested by the solemn teaching of Christ, whether savingly or not is not recorded, but they returned without the prisoner and it was asked of them "Why have ye not brought Him." The testimony given was this "Never man spake like this man" There had been an authority, an influence, in what Christ taught that took hold of the men so as that at least they were unable to carry out the design and the mission with which they were charged. The feast was the great feast of the year. It lasted eight days. Sacrifices were offered on each day, and the last day was the greatest of all of that feast, a day of great rejoicing, a day when water was brought from that living water, the stream which ran under the temple. Trumpets were sounded and extraordinary jubilation took place on that day. And on that day, when the people were exceedingly glad and rejoiced, so great was their ecstatic joy, that it has been said by one, that those who had not seen nor heard on that day what took place, had no idea of what joy meant, such was the joy of the people on this great day, the last day of the feast. And in that day Jesus proclaimed another feast, a feast of another nature. He stood, perhaps on an eminence. He stood and cried "If any man thirst let him come unto Me." Thirst is natural to us. It is part of us, so to speak, naturally, that we should have a thirst for water, and this natural appetite is used in scripture to express spiritual desires. "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters." Said the Psalmist again and again - "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after Thee O God." "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God." And this spiritual appetite is that to which Jesus speaks in the text. Let the thirsty man come to Me and drink. This expresses just what every new-born sinner feels in his soul - a desire for God.

First there is a thirst, a spiritual thirst, in mens' souls who have received grace in the new-birth, for a different, a better state, than that in which the convictions of the Spirit shows them to be in by sin. The state of man in creation was a

beautiful state, that of a happy, because holy, creature. Happy, because there was no terror for a holy creature in God. Happy, because it is apparent in the scripture that God walked in the garden of Eden and that there was communion between the Creator and the happy creature. That was a beautiful relationship. If you believe in the fall of man and your mind at any time goes back to that state in which you were created in common with all men, you must perceive in some degree the terrible fall that we had in our head Adam. From what a height we fell. From holiness to sinfulness, from communion with God to estrangement from Him. From approval of God in the law, which we obeyed, to condemnation by God. From access to Him when He came into the garden, to expulsion from that garden, and the placing of a flaming sword at the gate of the garden, turning every way to forbid the approach and re-entrance into that garden, of guilty men. This is the blessed state in man's creation. His fall brought him into another state, a different relationship under the law. It brought him into, as I have said, an estrangement from God. A stranger to hope, man became, because a stranger to goodness. Nothing good, nothing right, no honesty, as in God's sight, no cleanness in the sight of the judgement of the law. The thought of man's heart we are told, in infallible scripture, is only evil and that continually. We may think ourselves to be better than we really are, but the judgement is, that "the thought of the heart of man is only evil and that continually". It is a sad thing it should be so, but it is a mercy to believe it, so to believe it as to forsake it in spirit and in desire. "Children of wrath" is one solemn description given of us. "Children of wrath". What a state, what a condition. Wrath hanging over every unregenerate sinner as he walks about. Wrath hanging over him as he sleeps, the wrath of God. If you knew that any man had anger against you and believed that he was justly angry with you, if you were of a disposition tender and sensitive of things, it would grieve you, but if, O if any sinner believes that the anger of omnipotent Jehovah hangs over him, and that, justly, what a solemn conviction he has of his miserable state.

Another description of the wicked is this, that he thinks God to be like himself. No greater heresy can ever defile any

man than that, that he should think Jehovah to be like himself, and that explains the reason, gives the reason, of what we have before us today, when men are telling us what Jehovah ought to be, and what He ought to do, and what He ought not to do, what He ought not to allow to be done. The whole of those dreadful thoughts, the origin you have in that - "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Pride, pride, pride. Strangers to hope, is another word concerning man in his fallen state. Strangers to hope and from the covenant and the promises. Strangers, no position in God. Think of it, no position in God. As if a foreigner should come to Brighton, had never seen it perhaps, had only heard of it dimly. He comes into it, he looks at it, he walks about it, he leaves it, he had no real interest in the property, just a stranger. And so is man with regard to God, has no interest in Him, and what is worse, what is the most terrible in this point is, if God has no interest in Him. If God should say in His providence - Let him alone. If God should say to the Spirit - Let him alone, never convince him of his sins. O I think it is an unspeakably awful thing for a sinner to be living in the world and not to know that he is a sinful person, destined to die and destined to appear before the judgement seat of Christ, to receive that which was done in his body whether it be good or bad. Now grace brings all to whom it is given into a belief, a serious weighty conviction, of the evils which I have named, as being common to all men, and it sets on their hearts the awful feeling, yet true, that dying as they are, hell must be their endless portion. Grace does that, and grace working, that is to say the Holy Spirit working, gives a desire for a better state and gives inklings of the truth that a better state does exist for some sinners and that conviction is here called thirst. If any man thirst, if he have desires for God, if he would fain be saved, if he would fain have forgiveness, if he would fain know the Lord Jesus, if he might love the Lord Jesus, if the enmity of his heart might be broken and removed, and the guilt of his sin washed away. And this thirst is acceptable to God, attracts His attention if I may so put it, and moves His very bowels to the sinner causing Him to say "Come to Me". The waters of this world can yield you no satisfaction; the pleasures of time, the pleasures of wealth, the pleasures of good health, the

pleasures of pleasant friendships and all the things you have and may desire to have, if you get them, could not yield one hour's solid satisfaction, but I, Jehovah incarnate, the eternal Son of My Father incarnate, have rivers of life, rivers of pleasures, rivers of mercy. I have forgiveness, I give a new relationship to God. Therefore, O thirsty one, come to Me and drink. Does this attract us? There is first to be noticed in this beautiful word, the Person speaking. There were in that day the High Priests and the Priests and the sacrifices and the joys of that feast but on the last day of that feast there stood in the midst of all He about whom had been murmuring and disputing, and He cried, attracting attention to Himself, He cried "If any man thirst let him come unto Me". You have seen the water brought from the living stream, you have seen the priests, you have heard the trumpets, you have heard the joy, you have seen all of it. Now not all of this can give to any of you solid satisfaction. As if He should say, your state is evil, I can change it. Your guilt is dreadful, I can wash it away. Your rags are filthy, I can remove them and give you a change of raiment. Your relationship to God is terrible for you, I can change that. Oh thirsty man, come to Me. The Person is Jesus, the eternal Son of God incarnate, the centre of all, the circumference of all faith and hope, and love. Jesus, sent by His Father, commissioned because He became willingly, and lovingly became, the Father's servant. He brings good news from a far country. His birth was such as to call and bring angels from heaven who should, and did, sound aloud the glad tidings - On earth peace, good-will toward men. Jesus, to whom grace was given before the world began, now came to proclaim that. Jesus, the servant of the Father came to humble Himself, and make Himself of no reputation, and yet, blessed with the Spirit without any measure. The omnipotent One, who caused His omnipotence to flash occasionally before the eyes of beholders in the miracles He performed, feeding hungry people, thousands of them, on five loaves and a few fishes. Raising the dead, pitying the widow bereaved, and giving her back her son. Healing the sick, causing limbs, dead as it were with paralysis, to be new, fresh, active. This is the speaker. What a word it is. He speaks to a condition, notice that in the next place - thirst. He speaks to a condition. Let us ask ourselves the

important question - if we answer to this condition. If, that is to say, we can honestly appeal, occasionally at any rate, to God and say that we desire Him, desire Him more than gold or silver, more than all the pleasures we can imagine as in this world. We desire Him. Is it so? What were your thoughts before you came? Were any of your thoughts and hearts in heaven? Did you ask the Lord to do something for you today, to say something to you, to your hearts today? Did you open the Bible and ask the Lord to speak to you by it, by the Holy Spirit? Did you believe that the Word of God that you took in your hand was the Word of God, and that it could be made spirit and life to you? And did you, and do you, believe that this great God is Jesus Christ speaking to your condition - thirst? A state of mind, a state of thought, a state of desire and you would be, and would receive, these things set forth. What is included in this word "thirst"? David could have answered the question. If one had gone to him and said what do you mean when you say you are thirsty? he could have said and would have said - I want God, I want Him in a particular relationship. I want the cross in its efficacy, the blood of Jesus Christ, in its power. I want Him to be to me the Lord my righteousness. I want to be united to God in Him, in a way I cannot be united without Him. I want to have that which would be to me better than the state in which I was created in Adam.

"If any man thirst". Thirst for forgiveness, for justification, for sanctification. Thirst to be a branch in the living vine, to be a member of the body of Christ, a stone in the building which God is erecting for His habitation and glory. Now my friends, let us look as closely as we can to this and can we respond and say - Lord we do thirst. Which would you rather have, plenty of gold and silver and agreeable friends and pleasures of this life, or Christ crucified with the ignominy and the shame of the cross? Which, sinner, which would you choose? The answer will discover the nature of your thirst. If it be that you would choose the world, your thirst is for the world. If Christ crucified would be the desire of your heart, your thirst is spiritual. <sup>and the sermon</sup> Now <sup>let us</sup> that being so, look at the invitation. <sup>this thirst</sup> "Let him come". Is there any stress to be laid on - "Let him come" I believe there is, for there are hindrances, many of

them, and very great are some of them. And the first hindrance that I would name is that of conscience. Conscience, that strange, that powerful, that loud speaking, that authoritative speaking faculty given to men, a faculty now enlightened and instructed by the Spirit of God in the nature of sin, in the nature of God, in the nature of the law. O what a bar this is, what a block in the way. "What" says a sinner "what, go to God in this state? Go to God with this guilt, this pollution, this death, this estrangement, this enmity, this bitterness, this wrath?" That is a bar. May the Lord, if any of you have this bar now in your own soul's experience, keep you from listening to any voice that would try to convince you that your sense of estrangement is exaggerated, that your feeling of guilt is exaggerated. Listen to conscience. Huntington says, let conscience do its office. A sense of pollution will be another bar and trial. God is holy, holy, holy, and the sinner whose eyes are opened to see guilt in a foolish thought and perceive the pollution of an idle word (both these are spoken of by Christ) will find it difficult, very difficult to go like this, go in this condition to God. O it is hard, as a man feels. Temptation may come in the way. The devil tore the child as he was being taken to Christ, threw him to the ground and tore him violently. And the devil may cast you down, who would come, and in your coming and tear your feelings, violently tear you and tell you, so that you almost, absolutely, believe it, that whoever may get access to God, you will not. O the temptations of the devil are strong. He will never give way lightly. Only a stronger than he can overcome. Ignorance may be a bar, ignorance. Why, says a sinner to himself, I do not know that I have an interest in Christ. I cannot see how God can have an interest in me of this nature. All I can say is that He is just, a just God in this particular, and would be just in condemning me. Ignorance, but that is not to be a bar always. God wont have this stand in the way of a sinner. Let him come.

I pass on to notice - let him come, let him believe. The Holy Spirit is given to faith. Let him venture wholly, let no other trust intrude. Let him come. Devil, let him come, conscience let him come, guilt let him come, sin let him come,

pollution, let him come. Is there a proper reason to be given for this? Yes, listen sinner, listen. Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus and having an High Priest over the house of God let us draw near. More reason for going than there is reason for not going. Reasons for not going are finite, though terrible. Reasons for going are infinite, blood infinite given for the purchase of the church by God Himself. Forgiveness with God, that He may be feared, plenteous redemption in God that sinners may come. Might in Him, righteousness in Him, goodness in Him, love in Him, pity in Him, bowels of compassion in Him. Therefore, come. Let him come. The freeness of this is inexpressible. It is so free that our Lord will not allow any bar, any toll, any tax, nor will He impose any single duty in this particular, nor will He impose any work. O, I have said and I believe it, the freeness of this is inexpressible, which means, in my mind, that whatever the case of a thirsty sinner is, Christ says - "Come to Me."

Whatever fear, whatever ignorance, whatever weakness, may be felt by the thirsty one, Christ says "Let him come to Me". O it is wonderful that such a person as the Saviour is approachable. He is approachable and it is wonderful that He never reproaches one who comes to Him. He never reproaches one who comes to Him. He says "I have redeemed thee, thou art Mine." "Thou broughtest Me no sacrifice. Thou broughtest Me no sweet cane" but come, come guilty, come filthy, come lost. This is a great, great gospel. Some of us will, one day, be bathed in it, as we cannot be here. There are two things I believe, if I believe anything. One is, that no man could live long under a sight and sense of sin, as God sees it, and hates it. It would be too terrible for our nature. I have seen enough of that to know that, at least in my own case, it would be impossible to live long under a sight and sense, such as I have had, of sin as it is seen by God.

And the other thing I believe is this, that our mortal frame could not bear much of the glory of Christ crucified. We speak of the ignominy and the shame of the cross, but beneath the badger's skin of that ignominy and shame, faith gets a glimpse of the glory of infinite love that took Christ there, of the glory of the efficacy of the atonement which He made there, of the glory of the satisfaction that Deity received there, and not much

of that glory could be borne by our nature in its present mortal state. But let this man come who wants to see this. Let him come. O care of this world, hinder me not. O weakness of faith, let this poor sinner come through this dear Redeemer. Let him come. This Redeemer has water to satisfy and He will give that satisfaction one day. Now my dear friends, I leave it for the moment. I have spoken a very little about God, but if I have spoken the truth about Him, may you believe that. If I have spoken the truth of man, do not deny that, and if I have spoken the truth of this invitation of the Lord Jesus, God give grace to believe it and to receive it and to walk in humble obedience of faith to it and may the Lord command His blessing to rest on you and on me and on all His dear people, and the praise shall be His.