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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 12 August 1925

LEVITICUS 16 v 17

"And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel"

The gospel in Leviticus is very beautiful, is seen to be the clearest pointing God gave in the Levitical dispensation to the atonement of Christ. The key to this Book you will find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and it is a mercy that it has pleased God to give the two Testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament, to reveal Himself and His mind and His purposes and His work to save the Church. The Word of God, which is divided, as it were, into Old and New Testaments, is but one Book, one organic whole, never to be really divided though spoken of, as we speak of it, as consisting of two parts; only one part really. This word that I have read for a text exhibits two great things. The first is sin; the second is God's remedy for sin. Oh sin, sin, sin, what hast thou done? Thou hast defaced the created image of God in man; made man unfit for the presence of God. Thou hast rendered it impossible for God to commune in a friendly way with man under the law which has been broken. Thou hast driven man out of Eden, no longer a place for a guilty person, the garden planted by the Lord; turned man out, made of him a wanderer without a home and without a proper end for his being. Thou hast made hell a home for him, prepared first of all for the devil and his angels, and thou hast afflicted God in our nature. And if we had grace rightly to view sin, that is to see it as God sees it; rightly to feel it, that is to feel its condemnation and its pollution, that would fit us more truly and fully to view the remedy provided and revealed by the Lord in the atonement made by His dear Son, Jesus Christ. Sin is a separating thing; it is an evil without any mitigation; it is an abhorrent thing, filthy, guilty, powerful, subtle, binding, driving, confusing, turning men into gods, creating

an enmity which must be slain or the subject of it can never see God with peace. Sin - I believe the people who know most of Christ are most conversant with sin, not in the practice of it, but in the painful experience of it. They know most of sin, and feel most about it, who know most of the atonement, and they confess it the most. They deal most particularly with it, so to speak; they take it up in particulars even as in this chapter we read of all their transgressions in all their sins. O, it is a separation between a holy God and a sinner, and he is a blessed person, though he may not often think it, who rightly knows sin by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. I wish one thing today for you and for myself, that we might all be grieved that we had ever vexed and grieved the Holy Spirit, part of whose work in the church is to convince of sin. If He should cease for a time to be a reprover in any of us, woe be to us for that time. If He should leave us to blind our minds to sin it would be a terrible leaving, and His return would be very solemn, though merciful. Think of Who He is. He is God; He is a Person, the third Person in the Trinity. He was deeply concerned in the formation of the body that the Son of God took into union with His divine Person. He was in that Person, Jesus Christ, without measure all His days on earth. He comes from that Person, Jesus now exalted in heaven, as His Spirit, as the Unction of the Holy One, as the Teacher, and the Guide and Sealer of the saints unto the day of redemption. It is that Spirit who reveals Jesus Christ. It is that Holy Spirit who sheds abroad in the heart the love of God, Who opens the mysteries of the gospel, and Who wrote by the hand of Moses all those beautiful laws and statutes concerning redemption in the book of Leviticus; yea in the whole Pentateuch and the whole Bible. It was the Spirit Who wrote all this by Moses. "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place."; the tabernacle that God set up, in which He would dwell, place His Name, and commune from off the Mercy Seat with His people; the tabernacle in which was the Ark of the Covenant, and the Mercy Seat covering that Ark where God would dwell, where He would shine, where He would speak, and where, in the Person of the High Priest, He would permit a whole nation to come to Him in the atonement. And answering to this beautiful type is the ante-type, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, and as you have it in the Revelation, "The tabernacle of God is with men". It was in

Israel, with men; there was the centre of that nation's life; there was the circumference of all its blessings. Thence irradiated every mercy and good law that the Israelites had given to them. The tabernacle; mind the tabernacle, the centre of all worship. Thrice a year, every male of an age to go, must go to that place set up by the Lord in which His Name was to be worshipped, and if you rightly worship you will always go to the tabernacle; always. An apostatising nation had its high places and altars everywhere. Every reformation that took place in the nation destroyed those high places and there was a return to Jerusalem, to the true worship of God. Every time you depart from the tabernacle then you do evil. When you set up something of your own, you do evil, and whenever you return it will not be to something new, but to the old ways, the old paths, and the blessed worship. Look at the day in which we live, and see the remedies that are prescribed to restore man. Look at the professing church; hardly a mention of God or of sin or of the atonement, or of the Holy Ghost. Mind new remedies do not come to you. All worship short of this and outside of this is nothing but vanity, a stench in God's nostrils, an abomination to Him. No man shall be in the tabernacle of the congregation when the high priest goeth in to make an atonement. O, what a shutting out has sin brought to us. Remember for a moment that the tabernacle was where God was, and there we may not come, as we are sinners. Do you feel shut out by sin? Do you feel sin to be a bar between you and a holy God? Does conviction of sin live in you more or less distinctly and painfully? Then you will feel, as regarding your state as a sinner, that that is a bar. You may not go in as a breaker of the law, as a guilty person, as a defiled person. Very solemn, very painful, very grievous to a new born soul.

But now the Lord most mercifully speaks of an atonement; let us notice this. And first of all there can be no union and no communion between a holy God and a sinner except in and by a perfect atonement. The bullock and the goat must be slain, made a sacrifice of; their blood taken up and taken into the holy place and into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled there on the Mercy Seat. And in the Holy of Holies with that blood there must be the golden censer with incense and fire; fire taken from off the altar, that had fed upon the sacrifice, that fire must kindle the incense. That shows that the atonement and the perfume of the holy place both arose from the

sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and only one Person to do it; only one Person, Jesus, the eternal Son of God incarnate, who said: Lo I come to do Thy will O God; Thy law is within my heart. He taketh away the first - the tabernacle with all its laboured services, and that, of which the priests said, when they were degenerated, what a weariness is it - He taketh away that and He establishes the second. The atonement is the removal of sin, and if sin be not removed from us we are lost for ever. Hell must swallow us up unless sin be removed I come, He said, to do Thy will O God, and He tells us in John what that will is. "This commandment have I received of My Father". What was the commandment? To lay down His life, to do it voluntarily, to make an offering of Himself; to offer Himself without spot to God. This is the way, the only way. Sin must be removed from a sinner or he can never see the face of God with joy. This is clearly taught. No man? No, no man must be in the tabernacle. Divine justice forbids it, divine holiness forbids it, the law of God forbids it, the majesty of God forbids it, the holy claims of God on a sinner forbid it. No man. All access to God in the true tabernacle is on the ground of the atonement that has been made. Shut out! O, solemn! When a man fears God he knows the separating power of sin and dreads it. When he sees the holiness of God he trembles at it, and not only at the beginning but all the way through, and the sweeter and more blessed the confidence that a person has in God, the more he will tremble at sin, and the more afraid will he be of committing it. Whenever you feel your hearts hardened at any time, and for a time, do you not tremble? When you have some realisation of the holy majesty of God, do you not tremble? When you feel that you have broken through every precept and statute, and that your whole nature is against God, do you not tremble? And what encouragement can you find, what boldness do you feel to approach this God, except in and through the atonement? May we never forget that sin is a bar, that it shuts out, from the presence of God, the sinner, and that there is no return except in the Lord Jesus Christ. "For by Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father". When the atonement was made then the high priest was said to come out - "He shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD" - and the people would see him; the people would perceive that He had done it. The incense had covered him, the blood had secured him in the Holy of Holies, and the pomegranates on his high priestly garments, alternating with the bells, these would show the

fruitfulness of his atoning work and declare it, even that God had accepted him, and when he came out then the people would know that his work had been accepted; that an atonement pleasing to God, according to the ordination of God in that dispensation, had been accepted. And what may one say here? You must see Jesus; you must see Him else you will never feel able to approach God. You must see Him. How can you see Him? Why, by that blessed, divine, holy, gracious, tender, loving Spirit, who comes from Him and takes of His things and shows them to you. I have been very grieved this week at times for vexing and grieving this divine teacher, this gracious Spirit. It has hurt my soul much to reflect on that, that I have vexed and grieved Him and done despite unto Him; that, as Hart expresses it, we may unkindly quench these influences which are gentle sometimes; we may my friends indeed. You will never see Jesus without that divine Spirit. The Apostle says in the Hebrews, We see Jesus, tasting death for every man; crowned with glory and honour. O, the sweetness of that sight. O, how it animates faith; how it draws out confession; how it makes the man who is blessed with it hate himself for sinning; loathe his sin, loathe himself, deny himself, and take up his cross and go forth unto Jesus without the camp bearing His reproach. He sees the atonement has been made; then he can rely on it. Other ground he seeks none; other refuge he would have none; he would not look at another thing for salvation or any other person; a manifested Christ is quite enough for a self-despairing sinner; a manifested Saviour is enough for a lost soul, and every one knows that who gets the blessed vision of faith. You may imagine a godly Jew, whose faith stretched forward to see the promised Messiah, being comforted when the high priest came out of the Holy of Holies, when he emerged having done that great work, and the people saw that once more, another year, another year's sins, delinquencies, departures had been atoned for and now the Lord had accepted, and these people, these gracious Jews, were satisfied, by faith in the promised Messiah. So is it today in the spirit when we see the Lord Jesus having made an end of sin, having put it away by the sacrifice of Himself; having harmonised in His sacrifice and in His Person all the attributes, the perfections of Deity with the holiness and the happiness of a sinner. That sight animates, strengthens, draws out, confirms and enlarges. Do we get that sight? 'Tis a coming forth, as it were, from the depths of eternal love and the mysteries that were accomplished on the cross,

and showing a new way, and a new home. We see our Father, not just in His wisdom, goodness, and power as made known in creation and in the law, but more beneficent, kind, loving, tender, passing by transgression, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. We see these things in a manifested Saviour. O, happy sinner who gets a sight of Jesus Christ, as if eternity is open to his view and the Trinity is seen by his faith, the God of all grace, reconciling this sinner unto Himself.

And then in the next place we may say that the atonement having been made and the manifestation of it being also made to the Jews, they would see that there was a new way, an opened way; they could come into the tabernacle; there they could worship. The Man Christ Jesus has come forth and you poor, guilty, weak creatures - myself the chief - we may, by faith, go into the presence of a great, holy, gracious God. Think of it, think of the wonder. And when this comes home, this doctrine becomes an experience in you. You perceive that there not only is a new way but that you are walking in it - We walk by faith; that you not only see that God may be approached, but that you do approach Him; and not only that He is precious through the atonement, but that He is precious to you, accepts you - I will accept you with your sweet savour. Is it not wonderful? A few minutes of this will make such an impression on your soul, O sinner, you wont forget it. A little access to a holy God, access to a good God, access through the Lord Jesus to go in now; no bar, no law to say you may not come, no sin to say you may not come, no devil allowed, for the moment, to keep you out; you go into the holy presence and there worship; yes, worship. And these graces are all in exercise then, faith and hope and love and humility; self-abhorrence, hatred of sin, love to the Lord Jesus and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. If I might turn aside for a minute, it would be to say this - do notice the Spirit; take particular notice of the Holy Ghost, as He is spoken of in the Scriptures; that Spirit under whose benign dispensation the saints live. When they really live they are animated by Him as He brings Christ's eternal life into the soul; as He is in the heart a well of water springing up into eternal life and cleansing the thoughts, the affections, the understanding, the will; cleansing them all by His Own pure, blessed water; a well of water. O, what a mercy it is to have this good Spirit; what a blessing it is. If He is

with a saint, that saint is blessed. If He is with a church, that church is blessed. All true reformations, returning to God, are by this good Spirit; nothing new, but old things returned to and old things brought back. He it is who remembers the promise and brings it home. He it is who works in the saints according to the will of God and gives power to will and to do of God's good pleasure. No Spirit without the atonement. No, He reveals the things of God as they are in the Lord Jesus. So may we be blessed.

If then there is a new and living way - and there is, as Paul expresses it in the Hebrews: "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the Holiest by a new and living way", by the blood of Jesus - this then follows, that it becomes a living and sweet experience. Occasionally - not every minute, alas; it wont be here; it will be hereafter - there is a living experience of this. "He shall" says Jesus, of the Holy Ghost, "He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". Now this entering into God has in it many things, as first an affliction of your soul because of the atonement, and by reason of it, the virtue of it. "Ye shall afflict your souls". It was done before the atonement. This is sweet repentance; this is denying self, taking up your cross. No repentance apart from the atonement. That sheds its influence on a sinner; that softens his heart. That, opening a new way for him, brings him before the Lord in the Spirit and he repents and he afflicts his soul. Busy nature is cut down; the working arm is broken; the loins have affliction laid on them. Thus the sinner broken to pieces finds himself repenting, sweetly repenting; not once - No, not once only - all his days. While they live, repenting saints the Saviour own and prove it to be not a gloomy thing

A sinner may repent and sing  
Rejoice and be ashamed

That is one blessed effect of the atonement and if you get it you will know I speak the truth, and you will say, O if I could live in this spirit. Lord, keep me from a hard heart; keep me from hardening my heart; keep me from brow beating into hardness my conscience; keep me from indulging evil. Repentance is sweet; I love it; whenever I am favoured with it it is good to me. I am conversant with sin then in

a way that is pleasing to God, and comforting to my own soul. You understand me who walk in this way, the way of the atonement. It is a real comfort to repent and confess your sins on the devoted head of the suffering Saviour now exalted in heaven. That is one thing; you come with your sinful self - you have nothing better to offer - and this is what the Apostle speaks of: The offering up of the Gentiles is an acceptable sacrifice to God. Then the offering of Judah is pleasant to the Lord; yes, very pleasant. A hardened sinner does not bring an acceptable sacrifice; an unrepenting heart is not accepted of the Lord. But when there is the relenting and the repenting and the softness and the contrition, with the eye of faith on the dear Saviour's precious blood, then there is an acceptable sacrifice, an offering pleasant unto the Lord. O brethren, have you this? Do you get this access? Bless God if you do for it is very wonderful, very sweet; God and the sinner friends; God blessing the sinner and the sinner blessing God; God pouring grace into the soul and the soul offering up the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of his lips. God securing the sinner's heaven, and the sinner cleaving to a broken-hearted Saviour. And the next thing is in this access you can bring every trouble, every sorrow, every enemy, everything. Israel was surrounded by enemies and dangers and deaths, but their security was in the atonement. And so, when we are surrounded by dangers and deaths and, in this state, get access, we can name all these things and we do name them all and bring them to the Lord. He says - Cast thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. And so the atonement opens a way and affords a plea to a poor sinner to come to a good God with all his troubles, all his cares, as Peter has it - "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you", and it is a sweet evidence that He cares for you when you see that He laid down His life for you. " He who His Own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness", and righteous living is living on God. Righteous living is casting your burdens on Him. Righteous living is seeking His glory in your soul and then in your life.

And another blessing had in this way is that you have liberty to bring all your requests to Him. O, it is so good when, leaving yourself and leaving creatures, like the asses that Abraham left at

the foot of the mount, you can ascend into heavenly places in the dear Saviour, and make known your requests unto God. The Apostle Paul says: "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God". Bring them to Him. We need a good deal of faith to have an open mouth; a mouth widely opened. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". Large petitions bring; no one single thing shall you lack through Jesus Christ. But He says, bring these petitions; "Let your requests be made known unto God", and when you get liberty you have a good many things to say to Him have you not? When you get liberty, sweet liberty - not every time you kneel down - but whenever you get liberty, when it is as if the Lord says in your soul, now come near; what is thy petition and what is thy request? and you begin to tell Him what you want. Liberty from the bondage of sin, grace to forsake sin and self, grace to live by faith on the Son of God, to have a broken heart, a pure conscience with the mystery of the faith lodged in it; to have a real love for Christ arising out of true knowledge of Him; to be kept in the ways of God; to be preserved from backsliding, persistently sinning; to be kept in all your steps: "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not". O what a wonder it is to get access, to get liberty, true liberty before the Lord, looking to the Lord Jesus and looking on Him by faith. I cannot convey it to you; I cannot make anybody believe it, but it is a wonderful thing. I just get inklings of it myself. To see Jesus, His Person, His atonement, His righteousness; to see Him at the right hand of God; to believe that He is there for you, and even if your faith does not rise as high as that, still to find that you can plead His blood, and ask the Holy Spirit to come and seal you and to give you those intimacies with Christ of which you read in the Scriptures. This is the blessed effect of the atonement revealed and applied. And then you see this, the one thing to live for, to be stretching out into, to be asking of the Lord, is to have your faith fixed on the one remedy for sin, on the only door of access, on the only way of liberty from condemnation, and justification to be brought into your soul; only one way. And while there was to be no man in the tabernacle when the atonement was being made, multitudes of men have entered the tabernacle since the atonement has been made - multitudes. O, that we should be of that number, that God should open the door of faith to any of us, and that

He should look on us in His love and goodness and say, as He said to a returning and repenting Israel, in the days of Ezekiel, "And I will accept you with your sweet savour". Ah, the atonement is that sweet savour that God smells with infinite pleasure and that makes acceptable to Him every poor sinner.

Lastly then, you have liberty to ask Him to take you at last to be with Himself. Sin shuts me out; the atonement makes a new way for an entrance. Sin is condemnation, death and hell in the fulness; it is sure to come; the fruit of sin is death and death in its fulness is eternal woe in hell. The atonement is a sweet savour unto God because it satisfied every requirement of Deity, met the whole law, gave to justice all it could ask, made holiness compatible with the approach to God of a sinner and then by faith, the sinner seeing this, can ask safety on earth - a great thing when you perceive the whirlpools of sin, wickedness and death and every sort of evil about you - safety on earth; safety from the heresies of your own nature; safety from the wiles of the devil; safety from the persecution of the devil; safety on earth. Shall we get through? Do you hope to be brought honourably to your grave, sinner? I do. I think sometimes in my soul there is that, I shall get through; I shall be brought honourably to my grave. "Safety on earth and" - what then; what more can you want? - "after death, the plenitude of heaven". And all this through the sufferings, death, through the shame and ignominy and grief and desertion of the dear Saviour of sinners. All this, and when this is perceived by faith, the soul falls in love with Him and in love with the Father and in love with the Holy Ghost. O, I wish I could love the Holy Ghost more. I wish I could never grieve Him again, never vex Him again. It is so solemn to have had that kind visitor and then to have despised His mercies; to have Him check you and reprove you and then for you to harden your heart against Him and against His kind dealings because He comes right across the path of flesh and blood, that wicked thing, the old man. If you feel an uprising against Him as a child of God you will be sorry and you will be afraid of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that will be very bitter. May this divine Spirit dwell in us and bring the atonement to us and show us that this is to be our life; this is to be our worship; this is to be our way to God; this is to be our reconciliation, our strength, our hope, our peace, our comfort, our holiness, and everything. And no

man shared in the work. Sin said, no entrance; grace said, there is an open way. Sin said, God can never bless you; grace said I have blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Sin is filthy, blood washes it all away; is enmity, love breaks and kills it. And so we hope again and again to find access into the presence of God through the atonement. My brethren look for this; there is no remedy for us but this. If we are far off, no way of coming back but this way; no way. And if we have a cup of bitterness, nothing can take the curse out of it but the blood of Christ. If we have a heavy cross nothing can make it bearable and sanctify it to us but the blood of Christ brought to us by the Spirit. The atonement runs into everything; the atonement is full of goodness; it expresses the goodness and the love and the favour of God, and the Spirit brings all that. And no man shared in the work, but myriads of sinners receive benefit from the work, even salvation and heaven.

AMEN.