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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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LEVITICUS 19 v 37

"Therefore shall ye observe all My statutes, and
all My judgements, and do them: I am the LORD"

This remarkable chapter, together with the whole Old Testament, is addressed to the Jews; is a part of the National Covenant made with that highly favoured people, and it was incumbent upon them to do what their God, their Covenant God, had commanded them. And a remarkable thing in this chapter is this, that while the Lord might have said, and did say in other parts of His Word to these people - It is good for you to do these things; it is your life to attend to them; as you observe them you shall prosper; if you disobey you shall be punished; I will abhor you, I will cast you off, I will scatter you to the ends of the earth; you shall be a reproach and a taunt and proverb to all the nations wither I will scatter you - while, I say, He might have said such and such things here as elsewhere He did say, yet in this chapter the one word that gives authority, sanction, awfulness to the commandments, is this : "I am the LORD". There is an awfulness in this. O that God would come near to us and make Himself real; that He would take away the natural flippancy and frivolity and slurring things over which are so natural to us. You may say to me, well but if this word was addressed to the Jews, why speak of it to us; we are not Jews. But remember this, the Apostle Paul says: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." And it is abundantly clear, as I judge, that God, having laid in the Scripture those immortal principles of morality, of righteousness and of goodness - the observance of which ever has been, and ever will be, profitable to nations - and moreover, as the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Christ, and the spirit of the gospel, you will find running throughout holy Scriptures, it will be profitable for us to regard these words, and many others, as having application to us. There is a majesty in true religion; there is a greatness in the Word of God, and I would that the Lord should impress these great facts upon the

hearts of us who are here, that this congregation might be sober, and that we might realise that we have to do with God. Ye shall observe all My statutes, all My Bible, all that I have said, all that I have made absolutely perfect by a perfect inspiration, in which no error shall be found. You must observe all that I have said to you. And it is in my mind this morning to address you as being two parts, two distinct peoples, and first I shall address those who do not fear God and speak, as I may be enabled, as it becomes a man to speak, to the young members of his congregation. I am old and grown old amongst you, and I must leave you one day. By the help of God I shall speak to you, as long as I am able to speak, such things as, if you are led to observe them, shall be profitable to you.

In this chapter you are told not to turn unto idols nor make to yourselves molten gods. "I am the LORD your God." I am your Creator; worship Me. I am your preserver; acknowledge Me. When you build houses and plant vineyards and dwell in them and eat the fruits of them, praise not yourselves, but acknowledge Me. "I am the LORD". This is a great word and may you observe it. You may say, but we are not idolators. Do you know what it is to be an idolator; what an idolator is? Do you understand what worship is? An idol is something, whether gold, or silver, or a molten image, or a figure carved by yourself or for you. An idol is that - whether material, or only existing in your mind - that takes the place of God to you; that which is supreme in your mind, which holds your affections, which gathers your energies, which attracts you, after which you follow if you bow not your knee to it. That is an idol and the placing of your affections upon it is your worshipping of it, and, says your Creator, you shall not do it. He told Adam not to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Adam did it; the consequences came to him and he was driven out of Eden. And the idolatry that you are guilty of bears its consequences; you are under God's frown; His wrath hangs over you, His displeasure is against you; and if it burn to the lowest hell, how terrible it will be for you. This is a statute that England has utterly forgotten. A statute is a limitation and we have utterly forgotten it. We have turned back to Popery. The Romish Church and the Greek Church are both idolatrous churches. They have their images, their molten images, their crucifixes, their abominations, and they break the law of God; they break the Word of their Creator,

and they do insult Him who has forbidden their idolatrous services, and I warn you young people against all this. The attractions of an ornate service, a sensuous religion, may become great to some of you. You may find yourselves saying, well it is more pleasant than those tedious services that we are brought to by our parents. When you get older you may think you will leave them and be pleased to leave them and you will go, it may be - God forbid it should be so - you will go where there is a service to please the flesh. Well, I may not see that day; if I do I shall grieve for you. But remember this, whoever sees it or whoever does not see it, of your present friends, remember this, that when you turn to that kind of thing you will turn to idolatry, and you will turn away from God in that way, and you will do it at a tremendous risk. Do we provoke the Lord? Are we stronger than He? asks the Apostle. Therefore may you be led to observe this solemn word. You shall not turn to idols nor make to yourselves molten gods, gods that cannot move except they be carried; that cannot do good; that have it not in them to do evil. But it is an evil thing for you in your minds to bow down to anything, set up anything in your affections, that is supreme to you, that jostles out of your mind the thoughts of God, Almighty God, your Creator; and you are, in that regard, idolators.

Then you will find God speaking in this chapter again. He says, "ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by My Name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God. I am the LORD. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning". Wonderful is God's Word. The master is to rule rightly and never keep from his servant the wages due to him. O it will be terrible for a master to be involved in the cry of a servant for justice. Terrible if any of you, who are masters, and you withhold what is due to your servant. God is the avenger of all oppressed people. But it is equally bad for a servant not to give all the work which is due from him to his master; he is a thief. If he rob his master's till he could be put into prison, but when he steals his master's time, he is no less a thief. O servants, beware of your conduct, and give, always give, full measure of service to your masters. Remember that you serve before God. You are His creatures and He has laid down a rule

for your conduct. Masters do what is right; servants do what is just, and do, both of you, as in God's sight. This is a divine statute, and it will never be abrogated in your favour. If you break it, then you will receive the reward, and a solemn reward it will be. You are to observe this statute.

And again in this chapter God says "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD." Whatever is moral God approves as the Creator and Law Giver and ruler of the universe, and to be minders of your own business, to be careful of your tongues, and not say they are your own to do as you like with, is a very proper thing and moral and an immoral thing is to go about as a talebearer, as a pedler, taking his wares here and there. Beware lest you be as a pedler with your tongue. Take care of the character of your neighbour. Take care of repeating what is said to you. Whether it be said in confidence or not, be very careful about repeating it. Add no suggestion by a gesture. Add nothing to it by any emphasis. If you do speak, do it not as a talebearer. God has said this and you are to observe it, you young people, and older too; we all need this caution; we all need to be cautioned against this practice, common to human nature. "Thou shalt not go" about as a talebearer, "up and down as a talebearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour". That is thou shalt not bear any false testimony. If you bear testimony against anyone it is a standing against his blood, that is, against his life, and a solemn thing it is. And remember, God does not say, now this will bring contempt upon you, or judgement; this will bring you to be despised of honest men; He does not say that, though that would be true, but He says: "I am the LORD". This is the sanction, this is the authority of the forbidding: "I am the LORD". O gossiper, O you who use your tongue too freely with other people's words and characters, remember who forbids it; God does. Not only the good sense of people, but Almighty God forbids it. Thou shalt not do it for "I am the LORD".

Let me say here a word respecting all the statutes and judgements of God. Statutes are limitations, declarations, what shall be, and what shall not be. Judgements are laws by which we are to be judged upright or otherwise. Now the Holy Bible, the holy Word

of God, is to be observed. It seems to me that it is most incumbent on us today to speak for God in inspiration. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God". God breathed the Word Himself; He breathed it into the minds of the inspired penmen. He subjected them wholly to His influence, and what He told them to write. His Word was in their mouth, His Spirit was with them, that they did write that as an infallible word. Plenary, verbal inspiration. And now let me say this to you once more - I have often said it - O people, young people, treat with reverence the Bible; remember whose Word it is; it is the Word of the living God. He has given it to you. What goodness has come to this country of ours by the Scriptures; what glory has been put upon us causing us to be the instruments of disseminating the Holy Scriptures. What an evil is the denial of them as to their inspiration. It is written by Jeremiah: "They have rejected My words" - this is what God says - "what wisdom is in them". How can anybody be wise who rejects the Scriptures as God's Word? How can you ever be wise if you reject the Scriptures? You cannot be. "They have rejected My Word and what wisdom is in them". O it would be good for us if, when we took this Book in our hands, we felt it to be the very Word of God, and had an awe of Him, and of it, upon our hearts as we read it. It would be good for us. O dear young hearers, regard God's Word reverently; eschew the terrible criticisms of it; the higher criticism. Eschew it as you eschew a poison which, if you took it into your mouth, would soon end your life, and remember that the Holy Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Observe it.

Now let me again say the Lord does not say this and try to enforce it by arguments, as; it is good for a nation to observe it, and an evil thing for a nation to disregard it; as; that it will bring evil consequences; it will leave men free to substitute for His religion, one of their own, or no religion at all, as, alas, is common today. He does not say that; He might do. When you state a proposition, when you argue upon it, you do not try, by your own authority, to establish it, but you must argue upon it and prove it by your arguments if you can. God comes and says, I am above all: I AM THAT I AM, the Almighty, the great, the dreadful God. I have authority; I have made you, your life is in My hand; I preserve it. You have your daily bread from Me. I say this to you, observe My Word: "I am the LORD"; I have given it. I called upon Moses to write these

first books; I sent My prophets, I commanded them what to say. "I am the LORD". I gave My Apostles: "I am the LORD". I sent My Son, "I am the LORD". O, I would entreat you - as an old man and a minister - I would entreat you young people to treat this Book with great reverence. Who knows but one day the power of it will come by the Holy Ghost into your hearts; that one day you may be sick in soul and need the Good Physician; that one day you may be unrighteous in your own judgement and clothed with filthy garments, and need a change of raiment. Who knows but one day you may come and find yourselves as before God. Who can say but you will come and say, I am lost, I am ruined. Then you will need this holy Book to be applied in some part of it. The glorious gospel which is here declared in the Bible, how you will need it to be brought home to you by the Holy Spirit, and it will be a mercy if you have not to add, to your other convictions and confessions, a despising of the Scriptures; O it will be a mercy. Ye shall observe these statutes. Creatures of God are to observe what He says. Subjects of the Almighty are to observe what He says. Observe this: "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people", and that is what God has written. We are parts of the nation; may we not add to the nation's sin and the nation's guilt. Now may the Lord help you, you to whom I have addressed myself thus far, to take heed to what I have said. You will be judged by the Word of God; you will be judged by this Holy Book, however you treat it. If you treat it badly then you will be judged according to that. If you treat it well, in the teaching and grace of the Spirit, hang to Him who wrote it, and to the things written, then you will find mercy. I might a good deal enlarge here, in speaking to you to whom I have thus far been speaking, but this may suffice and I hope the Lord will cause that it may come up into your memories and into your hearts if it please Him, in time, so as to be truly useful to you. I want your good; I seek it at the throne of grace. May God Almighty bless you.

Now let us look at another part of this. There are people, God's people, to whom this word may be addressed. "Ye shall observe all My statutes and all My judgements and do them: I am the LORD." Israel was typical, a typical people. Their sacrifices were typical; all their religion was typical. Their life, their holy life, was typical. The type of something yet to come; a type of a people to be

born. Types of ordinances, types of a sacrifice yet to come, to be offered. And these statutes and laws we may notice, without any violence as I think, as belonging to them because they are typical, pointing out the everlasting gospel, the law which is said to proceed from Zion; the house of the Lord which is built upon the top of the mountains, unto which pilgrims exhort one another to go, saying one to another, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths, for the law shall proceed from this blessed place. To Shiloh, Jesus Christ, shall the gathering of the people be. They are to sit at His feet and hear His words, whatever He is pleased to speak to them. And I will speak, as the Lord may give me mercy and assistance, a little to this great subject. There is a gospel - O, what a gospel - laid down, a strict gospel, a gospel that admits of nothing else, nothing that the creature could devise; a statute as strict as the statute that was given to Moses who, after the Lord had shown him the pattern of the tabernacle he was to build, heard this word spoken to him: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." This is instructive and is what should produce an awe upon our minds lest we should add to God's religion which we profess, which we believe He has given to us, anything of our own. It was not left to Moses to devise the thing himself, nor was he at liberty to make that round which God had said should be square; not to take off that angle, thinking the thing would look better with it removed, but all the pattern that had been given to him, that he was to observe. He was to be most scrupulous in it. Was this for nothing? Was not this respecting the type? Did not God speak so strictly respecting the type? And if the type must be so scrupulously observed, shall the anti-type be dealt with with less severity? Shall we be at liberty to add anything or leave anything from that anti-type? Now I mean, in these remarks of mine, this, for instance. Where shall a dying sinner fly, but to the Saviour's blood? What shall a guilty sinner do, but fly to the powerful, the blessed Redeemer of sinners? Whom shall he embrace, but the Lord Jesus? To whose merit shall he come, but to the merit of Him who is Almighty God and very Man, One Person. What sacrifice shall his eye be fixed upon, what merit shall he plead, but the sacrifice and merit of our great High Priest? With Him would you mix anything? The statute forbids it. That is to say, the holy gospel forbids it. What says Paul to the Galatians? "I would that

they were cut off that trouble you", that would bring something to mix with this; the people that are saying to you, in their false teaching, you must keep the law; you must mix Christ and Moses. "I would they were cut off"; they only trouble you, they only hurt your consciences. This is the blessed statute and one who has it will say

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone

Therefore the penances that men have devised, the doings that Arminians would have us attend to, the additions to the gospel, and the subtractions from the gospel, all these, these are only breaking away from the blessed statutes and the holy law that proceeded from the Lord Jesus. And it comes to this, I repeat, a guilty sinner will be led to have recourse only to One Person, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ; only to one fountain, the fountain of the Saviour's blood; only one robe, the robe of the Saviour's everlasting righteousness. Nothing else. One says, there is no power; I do not expect to be doing that. You do not know yourself very well if you so say. Is there not a legal principle in us; is there not a spirit of legality; is there not a cleaving to Moses; is there not a desire to be righteous in self? Is it easy for one, after a profession it may be of years, to say, with the word I have just quoted

Nothing in my hand I bring

It was easier for me, as I now judge, 40 years ago to say that than it is sometimes to say it today, but it is the thing to say. It is inside this, and by this alone, that poor sinners are purged from their sins and have hope in God's mercy and anything added to this is an offence against Christ and against your own soul. O then it is a great thing to be enabled to observe this, and, says the Lord, you shall do it, because He will have a just balance, a just weight, a just ephah, a just hin. Everything must be straight, everything must be straight,

and the straight thing is in the gospel. A guilty sinner, undone in himself; poor and wretched and blind and miserable in himself, looking to the cross, to the blessed Saviour of sinners in the enlightening teaching and unction of the Holy Ghost, and there he is to live, and there he must die. When he dies well, he will die hanging on Christ. Do you ever think, O afflicted sinner, do you ever think that you will get a welcome from God? Does your faith ever reach that high? Look at Jacob's ladder; do you ever think you will get on the rung that has that upon it: "He that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". Think of it. Now how must you go? O, when the Spirit leads you, you will go just as the Scripture expresses it: "And Joshua stood before the Lord, clothed with filthy garments and Satan stood at his right hand to resist him." Satan wants you in hell, and your conscience says you deserve to be there for your sins, and here you are in that condition that would fit you for that place, that dark and dread abode. And now the gospel says, "Him that cometh to Me." How did the publican go? With his filthy garments. How did the dying thief go? He was inside the statute: "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom". How did Paul go when he prayed? He was inside the statute and he was led by the Holy Ghost to observe it and to do it. And this is how every child of God has to come and how, and where, he is brought inside this, the holy gospel of the blessed God, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and that has this in it: "Him that cometh to Me" - him that cometh in his poverty, his guilt, his rags, his misery, his bondage; him that cometh to Me as invited and as led by the Holy Ghost; cometh to Me with his eye fixed on Me and his hope built on Me, and his love bent toward Me, and his mind and his conscience opened to receive Me; him that so cometh, with all his fears and all his guilt, and all his trouble - "I will in no wise cast out." Now to observe this is a great thing, a very great thing. You will get the welcome you hope for. You will be surprised at the greatness of it, and the sweetness of it and the power of it when you get it. You will be amazed that He who spoke and knew all that He meant, should express so much of heaven into your heart when He gives you that divine welcome. "I will in no wise cast out". What a legalist would thrash you for having, and thinking, and for feeling, the Lord Jesus will sympathise with you in respect of, and say, none of these things shall keep you from Me. You have come as I have ordered, as I have commanded; you have come as I have led you by My

Holy Spirit and now here is the welcome. It means the beginning of heaven. The Lord's people are thus led to observe His statutes and His laws and do them. Then they are inside that great word that Christ spoke to some people who enquired what they should do to inherit eternal life. What good works shall we do? Said He, "this is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Easy enough, people think. O but they do not know. With a resisting infidel spirit, with a resisting reason, with a resisting hardness of heart, with guilt that stands in your way, with the devil who, at every turn, resists you, O how difficult that one work is which God accepts, namely, faith in the bleeding Lamb. This is the work of God, this act of faith, faith born in you by the Spirit, faith drawn out by the Spirit. This is the work of God, the acceptable work. That is to say, this is that which pleases Him. Whatever you think, whatever you wish, that, that He is pleased to accept. "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Christ is here. You look at the types. If you are led, at any time, to look at the types, you will find them all short. But you say, God commanded them. Only for a time and for a purpose. They are all short my friends. I know I am right in saying that for, says the Apostle, those sacrifices could never take away sin. If they could have done, would not the comers thereunto be perfect and would they not, if they could have taken away sin, soon have ceased? Why repeat them; if sin were taken away by them, why repeat them? They were repeated all through the year in the lifetime of the Jews until Christ abolished them because they were short. Well, if you look at the types they may lead you to the Anti-type in the Holy Spirit's teaching. Ah you may find yourself one day looking through the type and gazing on Christ. Then you are right inside the statute. "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone that seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And you are observing that good statute. Ah, look ye saints, the sight is glorious; see the conqueror, Jesus Christ, who abolished death and destroyed the grave. See the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. See the robe wrought by Him, that spotless robe to clothe, to justify, and beautify all who wear it. O see this blessed robe, this great gospel, this great Saviour. One may be very glad, yea it is a matter for everlasting thankfulness, that the gospel is without conditions to those who are helpless and poor and miserable and blind and naked and

lost. The Lord God does not strike the dying dead. He does not press into despair the hopeless who can do nothing, but He sends His gospel by His Spirit into their hearts and gives them to understand by faith what a wonderful remedy it is; a plaster for the sore boil of their sins, a robe to cover their naked souls, and blood to wash away all the pollution of their sins. "I am the LORD". "I am the LORD". This is enforced, you see; the gospel is enforced in this great way. "I am the LORD". I have given the gospel; I have caused it to be promulgated; I have sent it to be preached unto the ends of the world; I have given My servants commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and whosoever believeth and is baptised shall be saved. This gospel, this holy gospel, may be summed up in a word. It is the very Person and the work of the Lord Jesus, and nothing less, nothing short. May the Lord make it out to us and cause us to receive it and to continually walk in the holy statutes, that when we are afresh defiled we may seek fresh cleansing; that when we get distant we may seek to come back to Him, the only way He has opened and revealed, and that again and again it may be in our hearts to press after that liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, even free from their guilt, and from their bondage, and from their guilty fears, causing them to walk up and down in His Name, and to walk with the Lord in peace and equity.

AMEN.