

Sermon preached by Mr J K Fopnam
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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LEVITICUS 19 V 37 (LAST CLAUSE)

"I am the LORD"

We are in the presence of the awful God, Jehovah. He is our Creator; it is in Him we live and move and have our being. We must one day appear before His Judgement Seat and give an account of the deeds done in the body, and receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether it be good or bad, and if we stand alone we shall not stand, but be condemned. And I would, if enabled, speak a little concerning this awful God - Jehovah. We are very familiar with self, familiar with sin, familiar, far too familiar, with the world. Occupied constantly with the things that are perishing, concerned about them, walking much in that Scripture asking what we shall eat and what we shall drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed, whereas nothing really matters but this, to stand well with God, to be fit to enter into and abide in His presence through eternity. In respect of this text we have, as I judge, the sovereignty of Jehovah, the indubitable right of God to do what He will, command what He will, forbid what He will. This chapter is made up of commandments and forbiddings; the duties that the people had laid on them, what they should do, what they were forbidden to do, and the simple, single reason given for the commandments and the forbiddings is, "I am the LORD". We say, you say, I say, why this? why am I troubled? why am I hindered from this? why have this burden laid on me? why may not I do as I will? "I am the LORD". That is the word, that is the authority, that is the reason why we are not our own. "I am the LORD". And were this to be laid on our hearts with power, O what trembling creatures we should be, and by the spirit of grace in us what petitions there would go to heaven that the Lord would make us His, and enable us to walk before Him believing this word: "I am the LORD". In three particulars I would wish to name it to you.

The sovereignty of this Divine Being is manifested first in creation. Apparently, that is to say according to Scripture, there

was no reason outside Himself why God should make worlds, but He would; He would. The beautiful account of creation work which we were reading just now gives, wherever there is a heart to receive it, gives by the Spirit of God a powerful impression of God's sovereignty and majesty and wisdom and power, and the man who does not read the eternal power and Godhead on the works of creation is wilfully blind. He does not like to retain God in his knowledge. When Christ was tempted of the devil in the wilderness His one weapon to meet the enemy with was "It is written". If an evolutionist should come and tempt us and bring his reasons, such as he would call reasons, may we be enabled to say, it is written "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". That should be, that is to faith, a sufficient reason. What an awful position will the evolutionist occupy when the Creator of heaven and earth summons him to stand before the Judgement Seat and when it shall be read out to him that, instead of believing that God did create the heaven and the earth by His word, he would say, and had said, millions of years were necessary for the development of things as we see them, and that man has not fallen, but from the ape, and the ape from a bit of jelly or something, has developed and risen and is rising and is destined to rise still more and more. May that poor creature, whoever he may be, who goes by that sinister name, evolutionist, have his eyes opened if it please God. Be it given to you dear friends, and to me, really to believe in the Holy Scripture which declares to us that God did in the beginning create the heaven and the earth, to hold that fast. Creation has stamped upon it indelible evidences of the eternal power of God. His power and Godhead may be read, ought to be read, by all of us, in the works of creation. Stand here friends. In this God we live, because from Him we derive our natural life. In Him we live and move and have our being. Very solemn was our beginning and very beautiful also. That garden made by God in His wisdom and power must have been a wonderful garden; for delights and for nourishment O what a place it was. God made it and put a good man, a perfect and an upright man, into it to till it, attend to it, to look after it, and we were there then in him as our head. In the beginning God did all this. Now when men ask the reason this is it: "I am the LORD". I would do it; it pleased Me to make the worlds; it pleased Me to create heaven and earth; it pleased Me to order the world, the earth and all the things in it, so that there should be beauty and order in the diversity, that

there should be evidences day by day by the great light God placed in the heaven to give light to the earth, that there should be reasons every night, when the moon gives light. O the beauties of God in creation and the order of God and the wonderful fruitfulness of the earth and the wisdom of God in causing trees to yield their fruit, and seed. All these things declared God's wisdom. The man who denies this, could not make one blade of grass. He boasts of what he can do, what he can change, but there is one thing he will never be able to do, he will never be able to make one blade of grass, one insect, nor yet even one of his hairs white or black. Reverence your Creator, O creature, reverence your Creator. You live in Him. You move, have power to move; all the articulations of our bodies, all the pleasing sensations of which we are capable, all the comforts we are capable of enjoying and the comforts we have to enjoy, these come from our Creator. I say to you again, reverence Him. Young people reverence your Creator, and when, if ever, you are asked why, just say: "I am the LORD". He did it because He would do it. Give Him no other reason: "In the beginning God" just because He would come forth from His own inexhaustible light of eternity, would manifest His wisdom and power in creation, because He would do it. He did not need to do it, that is to say, He had no need of a creature to make Him happy or complete happiness in Him, but He just would do it.

In the second place "I am the LORD" has reference to the second creation, the creation of the Church in Christ. Her being is from Him. And this we have all through the Scripture, and every minister when speaking of this, if he is asked how it came to pass that there is a Church, must say, the Lord alone ordained that there should be a church. That should be always the credential when one goes and speaks about God. When Moses was sent by the Lord to take Israel out of Egypt, said Moses, when I go to the children of Israel and say the Lord God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they say to me what is His Name, that is to say, as we should speak, what is your credential? why have you come to us? God said say this: "I AM hath sent me". "I AM" - that was sufficient, that was sufficient. Why is there a church existing, part in heaven and part on earth? Because the Lord ordained that it should be. Now here I would a little, if enabled, enter into this great matter, a second creation. Of the first it is said, "And God repented Him that He had made man" It

grieved Him at His heart, repented Him that He had made you, had made me, because the beautiful image and likeness of God in which we were created we destroyed. Of the second creation He will never repent. Not because the members of His Church here below give Him no reason by their nature, their conduct in many ways - alas we do enough, we do grieve the Spirit. But of the creation He will never say I repent that I made this church. It grieves Me at My heart that I called this people. The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. What is the reason of this? Why "I AM" said to the second Person in the Godhead that He was to be the Priest, to be in between infinite justice, and the sinners on whom, but for His intervention, it would necessarily fall. Called of God to be a High Priest, to be a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedec. Set up to be the Head. No reason in the creature why this should be. No reason outside God why this should be. Think of it, what was there in us to give the Creator delight? Nothing. Nothing to merit esteem. Only just sinners. Sin, that abominable thing, sin that God hates, that He must hate, that He must punish, and yet in His infinite right, His infinite sovereignty, His infinite love, He made a church. In creation His Godhead and power shone. In the second creation His nature blazes forth in that ineffable Name, "God is love". And this eternal God has eternal love; the love must be eternal because that it is His Name. "God is love". Eternity precludes all thought of time, and therefore eternal love has no beginning in itself, but it has a beginning in manifestation; it begins to flow forth in certain acts and things and ways. God has a church, and now dear friends the question comes, of what does this church consist. The Pharisee would have it to consist in what a man does. The Publican must say the church is brought into being by divine mercy. "God be merciful to me a sinner". That is how it must be, because the church is made of sinners. When the innumerable company of all above, all the spirits of just men made perfect, are gathered there, then there will just be this one song, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His Own blood and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." "I am the LORD". And further, when this church in her individual members comes into being in a way of regeneration, each member stands before God guilty. Each member says with the dying thief, I am suffering justly. My prospect of hell is in the justice of God; my unfitness for His presence consists in my

sinfulness. The reason why he should cast me out is my sinfulness. Here is the need of mercy. Mercy must reign, mercy does reign. Each comes to that: "God be merciful to me a sinner", and each one so praying knows where to place the emphasis, "To me a sinner". Sin is the transgression of the law. Therefore when sin is committed by a creature, that creature transgresses the law, and the law must take notice of it, and punish it. The punishment of sin arises, not only from the threatening of the law, but from the very nature of God who uttered the threat. It is a grand, but an awful truth, a principle in the very Being of God, that sin must be punished. How this has made millions of creatures tremble. Some of us have trembled much at this, but here is a ray of hope in the Person and sacrifice of our High Priest. Here is a ray of hope. A sinner may say, and does come to say, "Hope Thou in God". There is reason for hope. God's goodness in Christ is an infinite reason for hope. God's forgiveness of sin, as it is in Himself, declared by Himself, is a reason for a person to come to Him for forgiveness. The fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness is a reason for a polluted person to come for cleansing. And the skill and the wisdom and the love of the Good Physician constitute a reason for a sick soul to come to Him for healing. And the fullness, and the kindness, and the liberality of Him who is the Bread of Life, will form again and again a reason for the hungry soul to come to Him for the Bread of life. There is a ray of hope, there is a reason for hope, there is a ground for prayer in this, and all of it comes from the sovereign love of Him who would give no reason for any of His doing but this: "I am the LORD". I have decreed this, have given out this, have sent forth My Son for this purpose, have given Him for a Covenant to the people, a light to the Gentiles; have put My Spirit upon Him to anoint Him to preach glad tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted and proclaim liberty to the captives. I want to put the crown on His head. There was no reason in us why God should chose and bless us. Misery was no reason because misery is sin-procured. Poverty was no reason, for He did not make us poor. Poverty, such as we have, is self-procured. Filthy rags are no reason for justification, for these filthy rags have been put on ourselves by our sins. Let us put the crown on the head that alone is worthy to wear it: "Worthy is the Lamb" O but again I would say, this is a ray of hope, this is a ground of hope, that God has put all that we need in His dearly beloved Son. "I am the LORD". If I can, by the mercy of

God, set this before you, so as to attract you who need it, who feel your need of it, I shall be very glad. There is this again to be said, namely, that God did eternally purpose to adopt sinners to Himself as sons by Jesus Christ. O think of it, a world of aliens, proclaimed enemies, self-proclaimed enemies, saying each one, in his native temper and fall, I do not want this King; I will not have Him to reign over me, and then He said in His love, of this and of that person, you shall be My sons, my dear children. O the love of this and the freeness of it is a ground for hope here. The freeness of it does not say to a sinner you may not come. It says, come. Come to the Saviour, come to the Father, come to the Holy Ghost, and all that you need in this one particular, an adoption, free, loving, merciful, everlasting adoption of a son unto God, this, this is the blessing. Come for it. "I am the LORD". And I would say here, that this is an effectual answer to all the objections men raise against God with regard to their own bad cases. You will never find a convinced sinner who will not, from time to time, have objections in his heart why he should not be saved, but rather be lost; why he would cut himself off constantly, but here says God in the Epistle to the Ephesians, I have predestinated you to the adoption of children to Myself by Jesus Christ, and it is to the praise of the glory of My grace. O what a reason in Himself is this. Come then poor rebel, convinced of rebellion, come poor wretched alien, convinced of your own depravity, and falling away from God, to this great God and He says: "I am the LORD" and I have appointed this blessing.

So with regard to every gospel blessing there is this one thing running through the whole, the sovereignty of the Saviour. Divine sovereignty in God; very repellent to a proud heart is this. but very attractive to a sinner to whom it is opened by the Holy Spirit. O what a vent has the love of God when flowing down through the sacred death of Jesus Christ into a sinner's heart. O what ground God has for His persuading love when He comes to a proud sinner. Doubts do very much mark God's people at various stages of their experience, but says the Lord "I am the LORD". And when He speaks uncertainty flies. When He shines on the soul then darkness goes. When He speaks to a fearing sinner, his fears go. When He says "Fear not" then holy, humble confidence is felt. "I am the LORD". No other reason why we should be adopted into the family of God. You will never find another reason in

the Scriptures and you will never find another in yourselves. It will always stand; God did it because He would. As Moses said to Israel God did not love you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the fewest, but He loved you because He would love you, and loved you from your alienation into sonship and from your pollution into purity, and from your unjust condition into justification. He loved you out of hell into heaven and out of the world into the church and out of trouble into peace and comfort. "I am the LORD, that is my Name and My glory will I not give to another." It seems to me at this moment that this, when rightly preached or read, or thought about, can be nothing else and nothing less than a mighty encouragement to a sinner. If you are enabled to meditate upon it, I believe you will find it to be just that, a mighty encouragement, since it passes by the unworthiness of a sinner - I wont speak of worthiness, because it does not exist - it passes by the sins of a sinner, it casts them behind the back of God, into the depths of the sea of everlasting forgetfulness. It does not take notice of the sores and wounds of a person, nor of the leprosy so as to be offended and withdraw. It just comes and says you are dead, you are aliens, you are guilty, you are defiled, you are polluted in every way, but "I am the LORD" in giving a free, and perfect salvation. That is the reason, that is why He says "My glory will I not give to another, nor My praise to graven images."

The third thing that I would name in which this divine sovereignty is very clearly and wonderfully exhibited is in providence. The Maker of the worlds upholds them by the word of His power. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah prevailed to approach the Ancient of Days and take out of His awful hands the Book that was written within and without and sealed with seven seals, to break the seals and open that book. Out of that come all things in the world. The providence of God for majesty and glory will always come next to the great Covenant of Grace, the Covenant of salvation. And He who has grace to watch providence will never lack a providence to watch. There is something in our circumstances that will ever proclaim this, whether we see and hear or not, that God rules in the army of heaven and among the children of men and that none can stay His hand or say unto Him, what doest Thou? One perplexing thing is this that He giveth no account of any of His matters. It is a piece of presumption

that we may often have been guilty of to ask why this and why that. The mercy is to be enabled to fall flat before God who is the God of providence, the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of it, in heaven He rules, on earth He rules. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice. The lion cannot roar, the furnace cannot singe the hair, the devil cannot trouble a sinner, without the notice, the permission of that great God Jesus Christ. All rule and all authority and power He has in His hand. God hath given it to Him. Now this is a great truth and there may be times with you and circumstances surrounding you that will call for a belief of this great truth. "I am the LORD", and well will it be to have an ear to hear what the God of providence says. In the Hebrews it is written that by His Son God made the worlds, that He hath appointed Him heir of all things, that He who made the worlds upholds them by the word of His power, and that the same God purged the sin of His people by the sacrifice of Himself and is now sat down at the right hand of God. All that is said of the Lord Jesus. Look then at this, has Jesus Christ put a hedge of thorns about you? The Lord keep you from breaking through that hedge, for if you do a serpent will bite you. So says Solomon: He that breaketh through the hedge a serpent shall bite him. Has He built a wall of hewn stone about you? Do not try to break through it. You will only break yourself. Whatever comes to you in the providence of God comes from the Lord Jesus and every saint especially will have reason to thank and bless God for that great providence that did not ask permission to do this or that, that did it on this ground: "I am the LORD".

Now I would desire just to name two or three things we may learn from this awful sovereignty of God for our profit. First of all this, reverence Him. It becomes us to reverence this great God. We sing sometimes,

Great God, how infinite art Thou
What worthless worms are we

O it is good to feel that it is in Him we live and move and have our being. He has appointed the bounds of our habitation that we may not pass. He has caused some of us to believe that our foundation is in the dust. He is our Creator. Reverence Him. "Holy and Reverend is His Name". May we in meditating on what God has done in creating us,

consider His wisdom and His Godhead and His power. Think of it. All that God did in making us as creatures, He did well. He saw it was very good. And this, when we reflect upon it makes our path more dreadful to us, that a creature made upright should deform himself, should deface the divine image, likeness, in which he was created and made; that he who was made, so to speak, God's friend, should make himself God's enemy, and cast out the knowledge of God, because he did not like to retain it in his knowledge. This is ^a very humbling consideration, and may we deeply ponder over it. Do not pass it by as a mere sentiment. May the Lord make it a truth, a real truth, a felt truth in our hearts. And the second lesson we may draw from this great truth of divine sovereignty is this, submission to Him. Submission, a rare blessing when you are in trouble. A rare blessing if God crosses you. This I know to my shame; I have learned what rebellion is. O but God wont have it. What He said to Saul of Tarsus we prove in many other cases. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Wisdom says, now fall down flat; do not oppose any longer; give up opposing; give up saying, do this; give up saying I wont submit to that. God's sovereignty says, submit. He wont spare the rod for your crying, nor will He change His mind because you do not like it as it is. "He is of one mind and who can turn Him?" Afflictions come; they make us see what else would scape our sight; how very foul and dim are we, and God how pure and bright. Try dear tried people by the Lord's help, try to derive good from your troubles. Ponder well the path of your feet, consider who hath made the path, consider who hath brought you into a snare, put your feet into stocks, consider His reason, I will do thee good at thy latter end. Consider the wisdom of God; it is more than yours. You think it would be wise and good and proper for this. He says, No. Do not oppose your wisdom to His, and do not oppose your will to His will. If you do you may find this, He is of one mind, He wont be turned. Some of us have tried to turn it. No He says, fall down, submit. Own My authority, own My right, acknowledge My right. And another thing I would name as being a profitable lesson to learn, and it is this. Seek His face on whom you are dependent. Seek Him and His strength. Seek His face evermore. We are dependent. What a mercy it is to be enabled to depend. Depend on Him, wait at His footstool, seek His guidance. You do not know which way to turn; what step next to take. You say, and I am afraid if I move this way I shall bring trouble, more trouble on myself. Do not do that. Beg of

God in the language of the Psalmist "Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." Lord, tell me what to do. Then it may be that His providence is quite clear. If it is do not tempt Him. If His providence is clear in a particular thing, then walk in that thing. If His providence says, this is the way, do not say Lord show me the way, for this is shown you; walk in that way. Whatever He shows to be His will in a certain providence, walk in it. The devil may tempt you to say, but I want a word from the Lord. In a case of uncertainty, You may ask Him, but in a case of a distinct providence, a distinct leading, it is as if the Lord says, now this is My will concerning you; walk in this way. And if He does say that, the Lord keep you from saying, I wont go that way. Ah if I might say a word drawn from myself, an exhorting word, it would be this. I have tried to have my own way, have been determined to have it, but the Lord has only made me know that I was a fool and a rebel, and that, but for His forbearance and goodness, I would have brought destruction on myself. Wait on God. Wait on Him if a path is plain for strength to walk in it. If it calls for a sacrifice of your will, ask Him to give you grace to sacrifice that will. If it comes in the way of some self indulgence, ask Him to give you grace to bear that, to give up that. Everything that He shows you to be His will, may He give you grace to accept. Wait on the Lord. Wait on Him. Pray to Him. "Pray without ceasing". "Men ought always to pray and not to faint". Though He should delay, do not give up. Though He seem determined to take no notice of you do not give up. Pray without ceasing. O church of the living God, O anxious, exercised people, this is the way, walk ye in it. And one more word which may be another lesson for us, and profitable, is this. Cast, O cast the anchor of hope for the future into that which is within the veil. Jesus is the God of hope, the God of hope. The Christian's hope is so placed, when the anchor of hope is cast into that which is within the veil, that it can never fail, never make ashamed. "Hope maketh not ashamed" O think of it. Can you say about your immortal soul, my hope is fixed on the atonement, on the Person of Him who made it? My hope for justification is fixed on the righteousness of Christ. And can you say, with respect to providence, to which you are enabled to submit humbly, my hope of getting good out of this trouble, my hope of growing in grace by means of this trouble, my hope of getting nearer, and nearer and yet nearer to the Lord in this trouble, my hope for

this is cast upon the Lord Jesus. Then I say no disappointment, no disappointment. "I am the LORD". I have sovereignty, and right sovereignty, undisputed sovereignty. O if we can but say, "an undisputed right" it is good. I wish I had never disputed God's right over me. May He say to you what He said to me, "Ye are not your own", and then you will say, Lord do not let me act as if I were my own. Now I leave this word with you. I have called your attention to it in those particulars, Creation, Salvation and Providence, and may you regard them. Go before God and seek to learn some profitable lessons. There is no circumstance you can be in about which it can be said, there is no good to come out of it, no lesson to learn from it. Everything that God does has some good intention where the saint is concerned. May the Lord hear us and help us and be gracious to us.

AMEN.