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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 22 October 1921

LEVITICUS 25 v 23

"The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land
is Mine: for ye are strangers and sojourners
with Me."

If the Lord will help us we will speak a little, at least - may the Lord grant it may be much - of the glorious gospel of Christ. The land of Israel and the people of Israel were emphatically typical. They were not simply an end in themselves. There was a great end to be answered in God having that nation, in putting His Name and His glory in the midst of that nation. It was a high honour given to that nation to have the oracles of God and the Shekinah and the presence of God in those wondrous symbols, but the whole did not terminate there. The whole terminates in the church of Christ, the property, the body, the wife of Christ, and if it would please the Lord to help me to speak this evening, I hope to speak according to the oracles of God and to preach the gospel.

I spoke of the trumpets this morning. There is another trumpet which I did not name but am to name just now, namely the Jubilee trumpet. At the end of 49 years there was always the Jubilee in the land. That was a wondrous time to debtors, for mortgaged estates, for servants, because the debtors, and the mortgaged estates, and the servants were free. This points to a wondrous truth - which may the Lord make our experience - even to the liberating of sinners by the Person and death of Jesus Christ. Yes, we sold ourselves. Israel, the Lord tells us, sold themselves for nought. "My people are bent to backsliding from Me" is another charge brought against Israel. "My people have sold themselves for nought". Let them go then - that is what the world would say. What does the Lord say? "They shall be redeemed without money". That is grace, that is Christ coming. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich." Here, the land would seem to be identical with the people.

The mountains of Israel, as we read this evening, were spoken to and all for the sake of the people who were to inhabit. That nation was to come again and be built again in their own land. "Jerusalem shall be builded upon her own heap" And this being so we will look a little at this great truth set out in the text, as it relates to the Lord's people, relates to the true church of the living God. "The land shall not be sold for ever". If a Hebrew waxed poor he might mortgage or he might sell his patrimony, but it must return to him, and this sets forth a sad truth and a glorious truth; we will look at them both. A child of God - alas some of us know it - a child of God may go far away, may sell himself for nought, may mortgage everything, may behave like the prodigal son, spend his all in riotous living, may become a foul, and persistent backslider for a time, may have commerce with false gods, and God may be provoked to send that child of His into sore captivity where, because he had dealings with false gods, he shall see plenty of false gods, gods of wood, and of stone, and be tempted to bow down to them. Then the enemy may be permitted to take advantage of this state of captivity and bondage, and mock this poor creature; say to him again and again - "Sing us one of the Lord's songs", one of the songs of Zion, and his heart will ache, his spirit will be broken, and he will be saying - how can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land. This is a case - O, if it were not existing - it is a sad case. If any child of God here does not know it, my petition for that person is that he never may. O people of God beware. The beginning of sin, says Solomon, is like the letting out of water; who can bound the issue? It is one of the most painful subjects that can occupy us; one of those solemn things which a child of God, having done, will fill him with shame for the rest of his days when he is restored by his God. Beware - let me speak, turning aside for a minute - Beware of the beginning of sin. You who have had liberty, be tender of that liberty, for if you are not, and if you wander wide, you will find God doing something that He speaks of in the Scriptures. He will meet you as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and it is no trifle. It is no trifling thing when God so meets a person, so deals with a child of His. Then a guilty conscience, a legal heart, and a tempting devil will make havoc with this person, and tell him that he has sold himself, that he has done evil as he could with both hands, that God has sent him into captivity, that his religion is questionable from the very beginning, that he has never had that real grace of God in

his heart that these have; that he only imagined it and professed it. That the judgements of God which have begun will be multiplied and that he will be living under the judgements of God all the rest of his days. The Lord will reprove him and send sharp reproofs into his conscience. The Lord will appeal to him and break his heart with the appeal - "Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say My people, we are lords; we will come no more unto Thee". And this will go on, it may be for months, when God will appear to be silent as to all prayer, and speaking with respect to reproof, perhaps nothing more for a time. Then it will appear to this poor creature that God has entirely forsaken him and given him over to the will of his enemies. Now says the Lord - "The land shall not be sold for ever". There is not to be an entire "cutting off", as the marginal reading is. There is not to be a cutting off. There is a temporary separation, but not a true cutting off, which is a mercy. And I shall give you some reasons for this, that the people are not to be sold for ever, not to be cut off. The first is this, that they belong to God, they belong to God. Israel was called His sanctuary. What an amazing mercy. They belong to God in these several ways. First by eternal choice of them, by their being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Who shall separate them from that? Who shall deprive the Almighty of His choice? Who shall say that the land He has chosen to put His Name in shall be deprived of that glory? "The land is Mine" saith the Lord. He says to His people: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" I made you Mine. I predestinated you before the world began to be Mine. I chose you and have separated you by that choice from all other lands, from all other people, and this is wonderful to every one to whom it applies. "It shall not be sold". The enemy may invade it, it may be defiled, and alas is defiled - ye have profaned and defiled it - but, says God, it is Mine, it belongs to Me. I have permitted the invasion, I have permitted the defilement, I have permitted the false gods, I have permitted the altars to false gods to be erected, even as Jerusalem was defiled by Solomon the beloved of the Lord, but "the land shall not be sold for ever". I shall come again and claim it. Hear O ye mountains of Israel, I am for you, and ye shall be tilled and sown. Though men say now you have devoured all, yet you shall be tilled and sown and bring forth fruit again. (Ezekiel 36) If you have one evidence in your souls of being chosen of God from eternity you shall

not be sold for ever. You will smart for sin - I would bring that before you - you will smart for sin, you will suffer for sin; you will never have an idol that God will not break and you will never get past idolatry without some pain, but the land shall not be sold. That is a mercy. It belongs to the Lord.

In the next place, by purchase. "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His Own blood" He bought His people. What a price He paid - "Ye are bought with a price". Yes, and what a price. "Ye are not your own". When God claimed Israel it was wonderful, very, yet they went and thought that they were their own, that they might do as they would, that they might follow what gods they chose. Yet they were the Lord's, they were bought. God gave Egypt for Israel, gave Egypt as a ransom for them; brought them from the Red Sea, the people of His purchase, the flock of His Own purchasing. It is so with Israel after the Spirit. Christ bought His people. If that precious purchase has been made known to you, then you have had the most wonderful happiness that can come into the human heart, that can touch and make the soul melt. The most wonderful influence in your spirit has been that that has come, when the knowledge of being bought with a price has come to you. I should not wonder if, when you heard the Lord tell you that ye were not your own but that you were bought with a price, you said to Him, then Lord, do not let me act as if I were my own. You wanted to be His, and to do what He would have you do. "The land shall not be sold" that is, Christ shall not be robbed of His purchase. No. "What have I here", says the Lord, in Isaiah, "that My people is taken away for nought?" (Isaiah 52 v 5) and they that carry them captive make them to howl and every day My Name is continually blasphemed. But then He says, My people shall know, I will come down, I will deliver them. I wont let the enemy always have his will; he shall not always be reeking his vengeance on them. They shall be Mine again and again, and they shall come to Me and receive the law from My lips. Did you ever get any evidence in your souls that you were bought with a price? Then God help you to remember it.

Thirdly, "the land shall not be sold"; it belongs to the Lord by conquest. He not only chose it, but put His Name in it. He not only bought it with an infinite price, but He conquered it. He had to conquer it. He had to conquer you who are His subjects. He had to do

it. You never would have submitted to Him, you never would have called on His Name, never have sought His mercy, never have been brought to know the cross and live by it, never have esteemed the favour of God better than life if you had not been conquered. Grace, grace conquers wonderfully. Grace has a wonderful compulsion in it, a compulsion that is so sweet as to make the person on whom it is put most willing, most willing to be under that compulsion all the rest of his days. I should think that Peter never was more willing to be a disciple, never more submissive to the will of his Master, never more desirous of doing the will of his Master, than when Christ compelled him to have his feet washed by Christ Himself. Compelled him? you say. Yes, I do say it, and the compulsion was wonderful. It was this. "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me." And that had such an effect on Peter that, with all his natural impulsiveness, he said instantly, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And that is what Christ will do with you if He has not already done it, and if He has done it already, you will want it to be done again and again. We need a great deal of managing and a great many times we need to be converted; and that is how Christ conquers people. He gives them to see the infinite mercy of belonging to Him. He gives them to see the terrribleness of being separated from Him, of having no part or lot with Him. He gives them so to perceive these things as that they can and they do say as you sometimes sing

Depart from Thee, tis death, tis more
Tis endless ruin, deep despair

What then is all the world to you?

Jewels to Thee are gaudy toys
And gold is sordid dust

What are you to yourself? Ah, you are poor dust and ashes, a perishing creature, a lost sinner if Christ save you not. So that is the compulsion He lays on the hearts of His children, and they love it when they feel it. The word seems a repulsive word; we do not like it naturally. We are never willing to submit to compulsion. But when God compels it is love that does it; it is a smile that does it. It is an instruction from heaven on the heart that does it. Then says the

sinner, O take my heart, take me, take me as I am. Make me Thine, bless me. So the Lord makes His people His by conquest.

And then dear friends, He makes them His by a wonderful consecration of them. I use the word "consecration", for I believe it is a proper word to use in this respect. When you are brought before the Lord you are not brought empty-handed, and when the Lord comes to you He comes to you with blessing. When you are brought to Him I say you are not brought empty-handed. But what do you take in your hands? One says, I have nothing but sin. That is true by nature. I have nothing but the delinquencies of my life. I have nothing that I can look back on with any satisfaction. I have nothing to take in my hand. I can sing with Toplady

Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling

But the cross filled his hands. The cross filled His hands and a consecrated person is a person whose hands are filled. I have mentioned this before to you, and I would press it on your attention again. True consecration is having the hands full, and the hands of a person who is the Lord's, and who is brought to Him to be His, and to wait on Him, and serve Him, is a person whose hands are filled with the infinite sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. The hands of your faith will go filled with that sacrifice. Well now some of you must say, I have spoken out just what you have done again and again. You have gone to the Lord guilty, and weak, and poor, and needy, and empty, and yet you have gone mentioning the merits, the Name, the Person, the grace, the blood, and the righteousness of Christ, and when you have done that you have really gone with your hands as full as they could hold of that which pleases God infinitely.

Then the Lord calls this land His Sanctuary. What makes it so? Why, His Name is put there. He puts His Name there, and that Name contains everything. It is written by the Holy Ghost in the Colossians that in Christ all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells. It is written in the same epistle, that it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. Now when the Name of Christ is put into a sinner's heart, there is God's glory, there is God's love,

there is the grace of Christ, there is the teaching of the Spirit, there is the unction that teacheth of all things, and is true, and is no lie. So God's presence, God's Name is put in Israel, put in the church of God. Is this land, is this church, to be alienated for ever? Says the Lord, it shall not be, for it is Mine. The land is Mine. When the Lord put His Name in Israel, what took place? Why, many meetings between Himself and His people. And when this is wrought in the blessed experience of the Lord's people spiritually, it is a wonderful experience, that Christ and sinners meet. There is a trysting place, a meeting place, where Christ and His children come together; where He speaks to them and they speak to Him. Where they know the Shepherd's voice, where they see His well-pleased face. Where they gaze on His exhaustless fullness of mercy, and love, and where they do find reviving for their souls. This is not a daily experience, but it is a true experience. I will not tell you that this will be your daily happiness - it will be an eternal happiness when you have done with time - but I do say this, that there will be times when there will be a meeting between you and Christ. One would judge that, to a godly Jew, nothing was more comfortable, pleasing, and blessed than to watch, as he was in the sanctuary, the smoke, the ascending smoke of the morning sacrifice, and of the evening sacrifice. Nothing more wonderful or blessed to him than on the day, the annual day of Atonement, to know that typically sin was removed, and for his faith to go forward to the promised Messiah and believe that sin would be actually removed when Christ his Passover was sacrificed for him. And does not this say that a true child of God will, by occasions, get a sight of the sacrifice of Christ? Shall David look on that ascending smoke with pleasure, and with comfort; look forward by faith to the day when his son, when Christ, who should come from his loins, should be offered, offer Himself without spot to God, and the child of God after Pentecost, the child of God in this chapel, never get a sight of that blessed sacrifice? To enjoy Christ in the type was much, but it is good, O it is good beyond words, to enjoy Christ by looking back as the hymn says

My faith looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear
When hanging on the accursed tree
And hopes her guilt was there

There was communion in this land, blessed communion. There were symbols, as you all remember, beautiful symbols of the presence of God, and of the favour of God, and Israel was permitted much; much privilege was given to Israel; the oracles of God given. And this points distinctly to the truth that Christ is to walk among His people. I will put My Name in your minds and I will walk with you saith the Lord. And this is true in the days of the church of Christ. When John got a sight of Christ, what did he see? He saw Him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Did that die with John, or has Christ walked in the churches since, and does He not still walk with some. And if it is so, if it has been an experience, and if it is a true experience, what a favour for us not to be ignorant of it, but to know it in some measure. Now to get near Him is a great thing. To get near Christ is to have the spirit of faith, the spirit of grace and of supplications. To get near Him is to be near His precious atonement, that is, to plead it, to mention it before the Lord as a reason why you pray, as the ground of your hope, as the only ground of any expectation you can have of receiving favour and blessing from God. If you follow the type closely, I believe you will see - and you will want, if a child of God - to experience this nearness. Joseph said to his guilty brethren, come near to me. And you will want, when the heavenly Joseph appears, to come near to Him, and He will encourage you to do it. When He falls on your neck and kisses you, then you will have courage to do just what these men did, talk to Him. Now the land belongs to the Lord and so these things also belong to the land. God put His Name there, set up His worship there, ordained the sacrifices there, and promised His presence and His favour.

Now the people got from this favour communications. Moses said, what people is so great, or who hath God so nigh unto them for all that we call upon Him for. This was the evidence of Moses that God was in the midst of them, that He heard their prayers, He received their prayers, He sent answers. When Solomon dedicated the temple you know that in that remarkable prayer of his, as we have it recorded in the Scripture, among other things is this, that when the people were carried into captivity and they remembered the Lord and turned unto the house which Solomon had built and prayed, that then the Lord was

asked to hear and forgive. And this is one of the things that the Lord's people are more or less brought to continually to look to Christ and in their difficulties, and captivities, and perplexities, to pray toward this house, this blessed Saviour, and to say to God, now hear in heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive. What a mercy this is. "The land shall not be sold for ever".

There is to be a jubilee my friends, and if you have mortgaged things or sold things, the year of jubilee shall see it all restored to you, and that, in gospel language, is that the debtor is forgiven, that the sinner is pardoned, that the lost is saved, that the prodigal is brought back, that the Father falls on his neck and kisses him, that the fatted calf is killed, and the feast and the heavenly merry making will begin, and the poor prodigal once more be in his father's house, happy and contented. Alienation from God is not possible under the gospel. Says the Holy Spirit in Paul - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"For ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." You may think it a great thing to be a stranger in the earth and a sojourner with your face steadfastly set to heaven, but to be sojourners with God, a stranger, O this is wonderful. To have God with you in your pilgrimage, to have God about you while you are a stranger; telling you sometimes that though you are a stranger here, He has given commandment to save you and bring you to heaven. That though here you have no continuing city, He has prepared one for you that is founded in eternal love and decree. "Ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." And it may point to this too, that when Christ was on earth He had no certain dwelling place. "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Would you another lot prefer, or have you had grace, or have you grace, to say that you would willingly, if He only would draw you,

willingly leave all and follow Him. And again, you may consider that God is a stranger in the earth now. Where almost is there a place for Him? Where almost is there a heart to receive Him? Do not men say, are not men saying to Him continually - "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways". And if that is so, may we be led to look at this question. Is there a lodging for Him in our hearts? Have we a heart really that has been opened to attend unto the things pertaining to the kingdom of God? Now if Christ is a stranger and has hardly a place on the earth, what a favour if we are with Him in that. We have our mercies and our comforts daily, but with regard to our souls, where can we rest? With whom can we walk except it be in and with the dear Redeemer? "For ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." And then another thought I would just give to you. A stranger passing through a place has a place to go to. He is not at home, but he is going home. He is travelling and wishes to reach his own home. Where is the home of the church of Christ? She has a house of defence here to save her, but where is her home? Why, heaven. Heaven will afford her sweet repose throughout eternity, and Christ has promised this to His dear children. Abraham was a stranger; he sought a city. a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Are you a follower of Abraham, the father of the faithful? Would you live always, or are you brought in your spirit to cry to God that you may find a city, a blessed city, a place where God dwells, and where His people shall be with Him for ever. "Ye are strangers". Said the Psalmist, "I am a stranger in the earth". What was his prayer? "Hide not Thy commandment from me". Do speak to me, do tell me that while I am a stranger here I have a home in Thyself, a place where I shall one day come and be for ever in Thy glorious presence. So dear friends, if the Lord has mercifully chosen us in eternity to be His, if He has bought us with His precious blood, if He has conquered us by His invincible grace, if He has set up His great Name and divine worship in our hearts, if He has revealed His mercies, and held fellowship with us, and met with us again and again, what then? Why, we are strangers and pilgrims in the earth. And further, all this says, that though we, alas, are bent to backsliding, the Lord wont permit alienation to be continued. "The land shall not be sold" - it shall not be alienated - "for ever". There is to be no clean cutting off. No, union formed is union maintained. God maintains it. Communications made shall be renewed. Though they may be for a time

suspended, and, alas, they are suspended, they shall be renewed. "I will" says Christ "see you again", speak to you again, say something more to you, something I have not yet said, but which it is good for you now to hear. And if these things have taken place, then it follows we are strangers and pilgrims, and strangers and sojourners with God, who one day will say the time has come when you shall be with Me and go no more out. What a prospect. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, and I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God and he shall go no more out." Then may patience hold us fast, may faith bring us to cleave close to the blessed Saviour of sinners. May we be persuaded that we are the Lord's, hearing His word in our souls - "Ye are not your own but ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits which are His."

Look at this great matter then my brethren, and see if the Lord has claimed you, and called you His Own, and put His Name into your hearts. If so, this then shall be true - "The land shall not be sold for ever", it is Mine. It belongs to Me and I will look to it, and see that no enemy, no devil, no sin, no idol, shall finally hold sway but all shall be cast out and I will come to you, and you shall come to Me.

AMEN.