

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Friday evening 18 August 1927

Luke 17 verses 20-21

"And when He was demanded of the pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say Lo here or lo there for behold the kingdom of God is within you"

These words have been with me for some days, and I endeavoured to speak about them on Wednesday last but greatly failed, and am not able to get away from them, nor do I wish, because they teach this - the secret of the Lord as being with them that fear Him, and tell us that saving religion is really a matter just between God and a person, a sinner; that whatever external religion there may be, it can only be a thing that accompanies salvation; that the voice of Christ is not heard blatantly calling in the streets; that when conviction of sin is wrought, it is not by blazing sins in the eyes of the world before men, but as Rutherford says - "whispering them in the ear"; that when sin is forgiven it is an act of God passed upon the soul, an application of the atonement to the conscience and when justification takes place in the sinner's experience, that is by a manifestation of the righteousness of Christ, to which the sinner, to whom the manifestation is made, submits himself, as the Apostle speaks to the Romans. And so I would endeavour by the Lord's merciful help, very poorly, very feebly, to set before you this, that Christ here teaches.

The Jews were expecting a deliverer. At that time they were looking for the promised Messiah and had carnal hopes with respect to His appearance, that the hated yoke of the Romans would by Him be broken and removed from their shoulders, and so, as Christ had been teaching during His ministry thus far, that the kingdom of heaven was come, they demanded of Him when it should be and where. When will the kingdom of God be set up? And

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La P 812

even the disciples had very carnal notions about it, notwithstanding the life and grace of God that they possessed. And two of them, you will remember, through their mother, asked that they might sit upon His right-hand and upon His left-hand respectively, when He came into His kingdom. But now He just corrects the pharisees and indirectly corrects His disciples by this very solemn, penetrating, instructive word - "The kingdom of God of which you ask Me, the kingdom of God, of which you have carnal ideas and expectations, will not come as you think, as you hope. Earthly kingdoms, more or less, are full of demonstration, external demonstration; the minds of the subjects must be impressed with the dignity of royalty and some outward signs of that must be given; certain insignia would seem to be necessary with respect to a kingdom in this world. Now says the Lord Jesus, My kingdom will not come like that. Men will look closely, they will examine narrowly, but whatever they may think about it, this is true, it will be in the heart, without any observation, and if some would say - now there is a kingdom different from other kingdoms - do not go after that, and if another should say - lo there is something different from what we are acquainted with thus far - do not go after that. And why? Because behold the kingdom of God is within you. A very searching statement; rightly received by us it will bring us to a narrow and close question, not what am I before men? Not what my christian friends think of me; not what I say among them if I speak of religion, but what I have, if I have anything, from God. What He may have taught me; what He may have said to me. This is the kingdom. A kingdom has authority; there is a law in a kingdom. This law reigns, but it must proceed from the sovereign; it must proceed from the sovereign; mind that. It is a point for us to observe. We have it in Isaiah where we are told that the kingdom of God, the house of the Lord is established upon the top of the mountains and above the hills and that nations shall flow unto it, and they shall say to each other - "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord." And this is the reason that is given "For He will teach us of His ways." Then the consequence is also set before us, and "we will walk in His paths." And running through all this is this "For the law shall proceed from Him". This is the essence of a

kingdom, that there is a law, and in this case it is the law of grace and love. This kingdom has a king. Our King is King of kings and Lord of lords, and when He is seen, seen in His own light as revealed by His Spirit, the effect on the soul is that which John felt when he saw the King - "I fell at His feet as dead". Knowing Christ does not leave people to be proud; knowing Christ does not leave room for the flesh. The flesh is always active, and often prevailing, but a revelation of Christ kills it. "I fell at His feet as dead". And when he rose it was by another life so to speak. "He laid His hand upon me and said unto me 'Fear not, I am He that was dead and behold I am alive for ever more, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death'". It was another life. And now this King reigned and you will find exactly the same. I do not want to get away from experience this evening. Whenever Christ comes, that is the effect, and what willing subjects are these who are blessed, what willing subjects! Have not some of us felt that? "Here am I Lord, teach me; take me, save me, guide me, reign in me, reign for me, rule by Thy grace, by Thy word; rule in my conscience. Christ has very willing subjects and all of them humble when they come to this spot. Subjects serve their Lord; they will all serve Him. Whether we eat or whether we drink, we are told to do all to the glory of God. Do you serve the Lord? Paul said he served the Lord with many tears and temptations which befel him and this is what the people of God are brought to understand something about. But they serve the Lord in very particular ways, for we are told that the people of God are a kingdom of priests, and that Christ makes His people priests; kings and priests unto God and His Father. And this will give us the true thought of what the service is that these happy subjects of Christ's inward kingdom render. Every saint in the world is a priest; every saint in the world offers sacrifices. I shall try to show you that I am not outside the scripture in saying this. In the first place these people offer to God that which is most pleasing to Him - "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." You will take your bad hearts, your daily failings, fallings, sinning, misgiving, unbelief, ingratitude, hardness of heart, and all the dreadful things that

you know and feel to be active in your depraved nature, you will take all of these and with them offer, by precious faith before Almighty God, the Person and the work of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. And you will say in spirit - though I have nothing of my own, my treasure is immense in Thee; though I have nothing but guilt of my own, there is nothing but justification by Christ; though I have nothing but defilement of my own, He is sanctification; though I have nothing to say before the Lord but to confess that I am a lost person, He is a perfect Saviour, and the man who thus walks, thus offers before the Lord in that temple which the Lord pitched and not man, is acceptable and he is a subject, an acceptable servant. His service is pleasing; his offering is pleasing as it is written in Malachi "he offers unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" and that is pleasing to the Lord. Christ more than covers us. One might say, Christ more than saves us. O Christ is everything and this is what is felt, this is the ground and the cause and the reason of all the acceptance of a sinner in the Beloved, that he brings the Saviour before the Lord, he mentions His righteousness to the Lord. Now that is the first thing, and what a thing it is, what a wonderful thing, the God of heaven more than pleased with His Son, more than pleased with all who come to Him in His Son, and bring His Son, name His Son, and plead His Son before Him. This is the only pleadable plea; this is that of which we read in the book of Job - "The Lord looketh upon men and if there be any", say if you are there, that it is thus expressed, He looketh upon men, all running madly after pleasure, and living in sin and alienation from God, and He looks on them, looks on a few in Brighton, and if they say, and He hears them, if they do say it - "I have sinned and perverted that which was right and it profited me not, then is He gracious unto him." This is the life of service from the beginning of the knowledge of Christ to the entrance into heaven of all the Lord's blessed subjects.

Now this kingdom is a glorious kingdom, and this priesthood is a beautiful priesthood. The kingdom is glorious in its power, for the stone cut out of the mountain without hands breaks the image. Gold, silver, brass, iron, clay, all broken by this Christ, this Jesus, and again and again ground to powder and

scattered before the wind as the chaff out of the threshing floor. This kingdom has laws which are diverse from all other kingdoms; this dominion of Jesus Christ in the hearts of His people is wonderful; as they find Himself made precious to their souls, they serve the Lord in this beautiful way. Nothing more beautiful in the eyes of God, nothing more beautiful to heaven, nothing more rejoicing to angels than sinners coming, repenting of their sins and saying, I am sorry, and bringing before God the sacrifice of His dear Son. I think I am a priest in this way and I believe some of you are priests, and how often, O how often, has the Lord caused us to come before Him with this service. Blessed be God, though the eye of man sees not this, the Lord does, and He is well pleased with His people for His righteousness sake.

This kingdom does not come with observation. To the Thessalonians the Apostle says - You know our entering in unto you. It was not in word. Our entering in was in power. You received the gospel. We preached not as the word of men, but as it is indeed, and true, the word of God, which wrought effectually in every one of you that believeth, and ye received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost, and you turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. That is the way the gospel enters - it effects its own entrance; it brings with it its own life, light, power, and authority, and asserts itself in the most beautiful and gentle, yet all powerful way, overcoming the sinner and bringing into captivity to Christ every thought. Every thought of salvation is brought into captivity to the salvation of the Lord Jesus; every thought of justification is brought into captivity to Him that justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus, and every thought of being accepted of God is brought into captivity to the Beloved in whom all the saints are accepted. As I see it it is a beautiful kingdom; a kingdom my soul would fain have in it day by day; the cords of it lengthened and the stakes of it strengthened, and also I would have the same for you, that we may be a kingdom of priests unto God, bringing that acceptable sacrifice unto Him.

And then there follows this; when a sinner is accepted in the Beloved he brings another sacrifice. "I beseech you" says the Apostle Paul "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." "Know ye not" says Paul "that your bodies are the members of Christ" "Know ye not that the Holy Ghost dwells in you", When it pleases God to give the sweetness, the blessed efficacy of the gospel in a sinner's heart, then that sinner comes before the Lord and he says - Here's my heart Lord, take it. And if God has your heart He has got the whole of you, and whenever you find the Lord has got your heart, you also find He has got your whole self. You present your body, you present yourself. Jesus receives sinners; they present themselves to Him. Bring these sacrifices of yours unto God, which is your reasonable service, spiritually reasonable. Jesus has redeemed you; it is reasonable that you should be His. He has saved you; it is reasonable you should walk as a saved person. He has called you by His grace; consider His calling, consider Him who has called and consider too what He has called you to, even to be His and to be at His footstool and to walk in His ways. And His kingdom is here; His kingdom is here; it will work this in us, if the kingdom be in us, - "Ye are not your own". My nature says, I would be, but I do know that God's voice on two remarkable, never to be forgotten occasions, said to me "Ye are not your own". And did I want to be my own then? No. On each occasion I said - Lord do not let me act as if I were my own. You said the same in spirit if not in word. "Ye are not your own" and "ye are bought with a price". You are cut out of the rock; you are dug out of the pit; you are made another's; you are not Adam's now, not Adam's seed, but God's own, a godly seed. And shall we give to the world, to sin, and to the devil, that which belongs to the Lord? Shall we mix with mud, or rather shall we not shun foul backsliding, seeing what the Lord has said - "Ye are not your own". Shall we run after and gad about after a religion that has no life in it, no holiness in it, no grace in it? What a mercy it is to be brought to offer this sacrifice, the sacrifice that we are told to bring. "I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God". And you have it, in the spirit of it,

in the Psalms. "O come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." (95 v 6) "It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. (100 v 3) And they said of old "Though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not, doubtless Thou art our Father". They brought themselves before Him; they prostrated themselves before Him, and that is what every saint is brought to do at times, really to fall as a dead sinner before a living Saviour, to be quickened by Him; as a sinner, ashamed of himself, that Christ may not be ashamed of him; a sinner weak and poor and empty in himself, that Christ may be to him the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Do you claim to be your own? If you do, this kingdom is not in you. There was one man who claimed to be his own. He said - I know not the Lord, I know Him not, and if I pray what profit would there be; I know not the Lord; as much as if he said - I will take no notice of what you say; I wont obey Him. Now what is your spirit? Are you in the world? Are you practically saying you are your own, or are you again and again under the constraint of grace even though you may not sometimes be conscious of that blessed constraint, going before the Lord and saying - here is a poor sinner Lord, liable to every kind of error and wrong thing; a poor sinner, with strong self-will and a mighty self of sin, but do take notice of me and pity me and save me and let not sin have dominion; let me not obey the law of sin which is in my members. Take me as I am; take my wickedness, my badness and give me Thy grace, Thy glory, Thy presence. When one is brought to this place it is presenting the body as a living sacrifice. A living sacrifice means pains and death, lingering and it seems to me that answers to what the Apostle speaks when he says "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (Romans 8 v 13). "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3 v 5) It answers to that when a man says to his sinful inclinations - I would be the Lord's; I do not want to obey you. Do you know what it is? I am sure that some of you understand this simple language. Take me, O take me; make me what I would be and what Thou in Thy holy gospel wouldest have me to be. Make me right; make me Thine and keep me.

This exhortation is grounded on God's mercies. One of them is election. In the preceding chapter - "The election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded." One is calling - "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance". Another is that Jesus has received the sinner and been pleased to eat with him; another is that He has forgiven all his trespasses, that the Saviour has blessed him. And these all rich and enriching mercies the Apostle brings out and says - by these, these gifts, these mercies, these kindnesses that the Lord has bestowed on you, by these, I beseech you, walk according to them. These are for separation; these are to make you, and do make you, people of God. And therefore by them, by their influence, by their divine claims, by the obligation under which they put you - "I beseech you present your bodies a living sacrifice." Now this will be a wall round you, cutting you off from the world. Said God to His ancient people, to the parents, - do not take the daughters of the Canaanites to be wives for your sons and do not give your daughters to be wives to their sons. They will entangle you if you do; they will teach you to walk after false gods; be separate. O my brethren, be separate. Come out from the world, from the religious world; even perhaps one may here say, more seductive is that and attractive than the profane world. Some of us have been separated. It may not have been the anguish to some of you to leave the world that it has been to me, because you have not a worldly disposition. But God says, come out of it, come out of it. To this day I hardly dare to go within certain sounds, or let my eye look on certain objects, because of what influence the sounds and the objects have upon my natural disposition. O my friends, what has God done to us and for us? What has He done for us? Why, heaped mercies on us, crowned us with lovingkindness and tender mercies. He said - I fenced my vineyard; I took out the stones and when I looked for grapes, what did I get? What more could I do to my vineyard than I have done? Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness? The kingdom of God then is this - there is authority, the authority of grace, the constraint of love, the influence of mercies.

Now another thing in this kingdom and for these priests to

bring to the Lord is a blessed sacrifice. I will name it in two particulars. First, a broken heart. A broken heart, a contrite spirit; when you are saying in your own soul, and your own conscience is bearing witness to the truth of what you are saying - how unprofitable I am; what a wretched creature I am; what waywardness marks my life; what unbelief and turning from the Lord do I manifest from day to day, and grace touches you, grace brings forth these reflections in you, and with a soft and broken spirit you seek the face of God and confess that you are sorry to be what you are and ashamed of having behaved as you have behaved. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise". My brethren what an amazement this is, when the Lord favours us to have such an exercise. Go, as a poor sinner, utterly ashamed of himself, and there is none of you have the same greatness of reason, (the same reason in itself, but not the greatness of the reason) to be ashamed, that I have. Older, longer profession than most, if not all of you, and O the unprofitableness, the shame I feel sometimes, the Lord knows, and mercifully He regards. That is a sacrifice. O, but will it be accepted through Jesus Christ? Yes. Broken prayers, broken tears, broken sighs, broken spirits, contrite feelings, these go acceptably to God and He receives the sinner. The sacrifice of Jesus, the merits of the Lord Jesus, the incense of the merits of the Saviour, these, in the golden censer, mingle with these prayers and tears.

And the next piece of work in this service is the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of your lips. By Him, that is the Lord Jesus, offer the sacrifice of praise. The Psalmist said he would. He said "I will offer sacrifice and praise", and in the marginal reading you have "shouting". Yes, and grace makes the heart shout to the praise of it and to the glory of it. And all this is in this King. Who sees it, who sees it? The saints see it in each other in the effect of it, the sweet effect. But who sees it? You do not know how it comes one day unto you, when perhaps you are saying - I am a prey to this evil and that sin, and there suddenly and remarkably steals into your soul and spirit a light, a life, an influence, a power. You do not know how, but you feel it has come, and you offer therefore the

sacrifice of praise unto God. It is not with observation. Perhaps your friends notice for days that your countenance is sad, for you have not had wisdom perhaps to wash your face while you were fasting, and friends saw your sad countenance. And another day they see that that sadness is cleansed from your face, and your very countenance tells them of a change, yea, and you have to tell it to them because now you feel - if I remain silent the very stones will cry out. So you offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

This kingdom, says Christ, is within you. Now I would speak for a few minutes of the glory of it. There is a glory in this kingdom. Peter says "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." These sufferers, these penitents, these weepers and mourners, these who seek reality and power and the presence of God, on them the Spirit of glory and of God rests. What is it? It is the glory of victory; the glory of victory. Victory? one says, victory? How can I, ashamed as I am because I am always being defeated, think of victory? May you be enabled, notwithstanding that, to judge righteous judgment and not lie against your right. When you are tempted to disloyalty, when some lust in you would go into the world and marry the world, what has the Spirit said? What has your heart said? God forbid that I should do it. The evil that I would not I have often done, but God forbid I should live in sin, and that comes in that we have in the Romans "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein." Tempted to it we are; fall by it we do at times; but live in it, that is another thing. I know sin lives in me, and you may say, many of you, sin lives in you, but the searching question is this respecting this kingdom - do you live in sin? Is sin your master? "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness." If you obey sin, you are its servant; if you live in the world you are the world's servant. If the world loves you, it shows you do not love Christ; if the world notices and is pleased with your sayings, it shows that you have not the sayings of Christ. There is a glory when a sinner has gracious power to say "I am not the servant of sin willingly." A thief comes and steals, but not

with your consent; he takes a jewel, but you did not give it to him. And the enemy may come and rob you of many a jewel and empty your pocket of the money the Lord has given to you, and use up the oil of grace that is in the house of the wise, but there is a glory here when grace resists, when grace says in you I am not the servant of sin; I am not a born slave. Is Israel a slave; is he a home born slave? Why is he spoiled? Every time you fall flat before your Lord, every time you seek a smile from Him that shall be a conquering smile, overcoming sin in you and enabling you to live on the merits of Christ and to walk in humble obedience to the precepts of Christ, every such time there is this - the Spirit of glory and of God; the glory of His grace. There is glory in this when a sinner can take his stubborn will, his proud will, take it as it were in the hand of his faith and express to the Lord what he feels and fears about it and what he often would have with respect to it - that he would have it bent, suppld, and put straight and in unison with the will of God. Rebellion is a terrible thing in the saints; it is a terrible sin and a stubborn will that says - I wont submit - that is rebellion, and it is said "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft". Witchcraft is an interference or a pretence of knowing something about the future, divination; spiritualism today it is. Rebellion is just this - a fight in your mind and heart and will against the exercise of God's sovereignty. When one thinks this about rebellion it makes a terrible thing. What, have I been living in that sin, fighting against a good God, against His providence, against His will manifested and revealed to me in His providence as well as in His word? There is glory when you resist and overcome and when you can say "Thy kingdom come"; Thy will be done in my heart as it is in heaven; when every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. It is a rough way Lord, but do give me grace to walk in it; a difficult way, help me to walk in it; a heavy burden, help me to carry it; a galling yoke, help me to bear it. The Spirit of glory rests on a child of God who thus lives and he is the subject of Christ.

A kingdom has its boundaries and the Lord's kingdom in this world has its boundaries. If every field about you were common,

trespass would be out of the question. Trespass is possible where there is a private property and the owner says, all who walk on these grounds are trespassers and shall be prosecuted. Christ has set precepts round His people like a wall between them and the church and He says - Obey Me here; be separate; come out from the world; touch not the unclean thing. Said Israel to Samuel "Make us a king". What for? Discontented they were with God, and not that only; make us a king that we may be like the nations round about us. You think of it. O this narrowness, this separation, who can bear it, who can bear it? And if you are very amiable in your disposition and have about you people as friends with whom you have no spiritual union, you will find this separation very cutting. God has not said - give up all notice of the world. He has said, deal with them and behave courteously to them; never bring a reproach by any discourteous conduct. No, be neighbourly. But when you come to the things of God, then you must leave everything and everybody. It is a matter between God and your soul. And He says do not be conformed to this world. "If a man will be the friend of this world, he is the enemy of God". Oh, but the world is very affectionate; universal charity we have about us, and religious charity; O it is very beguiling. Why cut off this? Well, says the fear of God, will this bring near the Lord? When you go into your room tonight and kneel before the Lord and begin to reckon up things, will this stand? Will this do? When you are brought into places, my friends, may grace be given you to put it so. Will this stand? How will my conscience be when I come before God with respect to this? Be separate. My kingdom is not of this world; it is of another nature, heavenly.

Well, what an amazing thing it is to be a subject of this kingdom and you see when people are subjects of this kingdom and they each know the other, then love is in them and you will find this

Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above
And he's an heir of heaven that finds
His bosom glow with love

But mind what love has for its object; be very particular and jealous here. What object has your love? If it be the world, then your love is worldly. If it be the Saviour, if it be a child of God you love for the Saviour's sake, if you have got a cup of cold water and give it to a disciple in the name of a disciple, because he belongs to the Lord, now that will do, that will do. But if it be some Zoar - Spare it, is it not a little one, that wont do. That will lead you astray and bring trouble to your soul, perhaps to your body, perhaps to your family, for God is jealous, but He is very good. So what I would point to is this, and I have desired that this might be the point of the service and what I have had to say, namely, that the kingdom; the abiding kingdom; the kingdom that shall not be given to other people; the kingdom whose laws are diverse from all other kingdoms; the King of this kingdom; the end of this kingdom within your souls, will always be the glory of God and your good. Now I just commend these words to you and the thing that I have tried to set before you, hoping it may please the Lord graciously to look on us as a little people and grant that we may have this glorious kingdom, this humbling, beautiful kingdom full of loyalty and of peace, so as that we may walk with God in peace and equity.

AMEN.