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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday Morning 2 December, 1928

TEXT: MATTHEW XVIII verse 11

"For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost"

The divine truth spoken by Christ in the text arose out of a circumstance which had happened among the disciples. They had but little understanding in the nature of the kingdom that Christ had come to set up and establish, but thought that it was to be a temporal kingdom set up on the earth in which would be offices, and which of these disciples should have the chief place and office had been a matter of dispute among themselves and this dispute had taken place as they were going toward Capernaum and Mark tells us that when they had entered the house then the Lord Jesus asked them what it was that they had been disputing about and for a time they were silent. Here the narrative tells us that the Lord Jesus was asked by them. "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus saying who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" This would be after what Mark tells us, the silence and the enquiry that Christ made of them. Then He, the Lord Jesus, sets before them a little child and tells them that except they be converted and become as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. The conversion here seems to be this, except you are turned round and turned away from your carnal conceptions of my kingdom, you have no part in it. Conversion is turning round, and these disciples often needed to be turned round and so do we. We are full of wrong; carnal things occupy us; we are familiar with them, too familiar, and Christ tells these disciples that they must become as a little child in their thoughts and conceptions of the kingdom which He was to set up. As a little child ordinarily speaking is devoid of ambition, does

not stretch himself out to be somebody and to be the first so ought you. As if He would say to His disciples, you must be as this little child. It is just without ambition, does not stretch itself out toward to-morrow at all. You must be content to be sinners, to be lost, to be saved, to be in My kingdom by My righteousness and My grace and My power. May the Lord enable us to receive this lesson. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Has the greatest measure of grace just to be in the hands of Christ as a little child. This, when felt, kills the ambition of disciples, makes each one willing just to be, and thankful indeed to be, in the church of God and keeps each one from stretching himself out and reaching forth unto the best or the highest places. And whosoever receives one who thus humbles himself, receives Christ, but whoso shall offend one of these little ones, (little ones here, not little in yourself, young, nor little in grace, being the greatest in the kingdom of heaven but little in their own eyes and to be despised indeed by the world) but whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for Him that a mill stone were hung about His neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea. Worldly people little know what they do, what sin they commit when they offend or hurt the people of God. It were better for such a man to have a mill stone hung about his neck. A mill stone, not one that was worked by the hand, but was big and heavy, that an ass must work it, and such a mill stone to be hung about an offender's neck were better for him than any other thing that could befall him. Woe unto the world because of offence, for it must be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee, for it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out, and cast it from thee, . It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye rather than having two eyes to be

cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.

Very important teaching in these verses. Indulged sin means hell, if God prevent it not, and also to offend or despise the people of God is a terrible thing and to lay stumblingblocks in their way is also grievous, because the ministering angels are sent to watch over them and snares will take the despisers, the offenders.

Then the text comes, for this is the connection. These people are so dear to Christ as that nothing will move Him to permit their ruin, however much men may attempt their ruin, for He, the Son of Man, came to save that which was lost. This text, short, made of simple words, contains the deepest depths of sin, of degradation, of condemnation, and the highest heights of infinite love, wisdom and power, within its sacred, secret folds. It is a wonderful word. We are in the sight of that great God, who is here, the Son of Man, and whether we will or no, we must have yet to do with Him, and He will have yet to do with us. Whether we believe Him or whether we deny His Being, we shall have to stand before Him and by the Lord's help I want first of all to speak of what it is to be lost, and I will go back to the beginning where God began with man. He said, the Trinity of Persons said each to the other, "Let us make man in our image and our likeness". So God created man in His own image. "Male and female created He them". That was the beginning; that was the beginning of man, let the scientist say what he will; let the evolutionist say what he will. We have in that word in Genesis, the beginning of man. He is not risen, but fallen. He cannot rise in himself; he is just a fallen sinner and helpless in that fallen state. So in the first place we are lost in respect of the image of God. We bear, as the Apostle teaches in the Corinthians, the image of the earthy, the image that is of death. The

image of God, in which we were created, uprightness, righteousness, true holiness, there being no sin in us, that is the image, and the sin of rebellion just effaced that image, left nothing of it. We lost it and we are just now deformed, huge, shapeless creatures. O how the infinitely holy God must hate man. How He must hate everyone of us as descending from Adam, for we are born in sin, we are shapen in iniquity. That is our condition. That is how we stand before a Holy God. Think of it. O dear friends, that is the state in which you were born, in which I was born. I say, how the infinitely Holy God must hate us. We read that He will despise our image. It is something for one man to despise another, an awful thing for a worldly man to despise a saint, but what is it for God to despise men born in sin. Do we believe this? Do we believe this, that we have an image, were born in it, with it impressed on our very being, our moral being, an image that God despises. That is in the first place what it is to be lost. And if a man goes through this world, if he be wealthy, if he have more or less uninterrupted health, if honours are heaped on him by men, and yet he be destitute of the new creature created in Christ Jesus, then he lives and dies with that image on him that God despises. Remember that the esteem of God is eternal life, and the despising of God is just condemnation, nothing less.

And the next remark I would make grows out of this that I have uttered, namely that we are lost in sin, really lost in sin. Sin in the judgment, sin in the affections, sin in the choice of the will, sin in the pursuit of the mind, sin in obeying the devil, sin in following the lusts of the flesh, sin in covetousness, sin in hating a man, even the sin of murder. We are lost in all such sins and they may be done in secret, yet God sees them. Can any hide in secret places from Me that I cannot see him saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord. Am I a God at hand and not far off saith the Lord. Ezekiel saw some things wrong in people but said God, now dig through the wall, and

when he had done that and looked into the inner chamber, he saw certain men in it worshipping the sun. O this sin in our nature, it springs from us just as water rises from a spring and if you dam the spring you do not stop the water you only order or make its flow in another channel. Nothing stops sin but grace. It is in us. We breathe it; it breaks forth; it comes into action here and there. It is sin, and this is being lost, lost in the following particulars.

First in respect of our affections. In the Romans we are told that we like not to retain God in our knowledge. That is why we are always saying, by nature, in affection, to God depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. We do not want to pray to Him. There is no beauty in Christ that we should desire Him. There is no attraction in infinite holiness that we should desire to be holy; there is no attraction in eternal love that we should want to be loved. We are lost in affection. We are lost in the understanding. The understanding is darkened, blinded. Men said to Christ, are we blind? He said to them if you had not the scripture, if you were not Abraham's seed, if you did not profess what you do profess, then there would not be the sin of presumption but because you say we see, therefore your sin remaineth. I wonder if God will say that of us, of any of us, brought up to hear God's word read in the family, in public worship. Is it so. Do you say why we understand, we are not blind. O but if the sin of presumption is charged on you, what a terrible charge that will be.

We are lost in practice. Our feet are swift to shed blood. Lost in speech. Their tongue is full with the poison of asps. Lost in our sight, our views of things. O what an avenue to the mind is the eye. What an amazing, what an awful thing it is to be lost in respect of sin. It is called being dead in trespasses and sins. It is said by God that the imagination of the thought of the heart of man

is only evil and that continually. Sinner, O I would say, congregation, we are all lost, are children of wrath even as others by nature. We walk in the course of this world, obey the prince of this world, and are with our faces to hell and our backs to God, and thirdly and consequently we are dead in the law. The whole law of God from which there is no escape, under which there can be no peace, no peace with God, and no peace in our hearts. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, and this law, this inexorable law, holy altogether, this penetrating law taking notice of the thoughts, this commanding law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, thy creator, with all thy heart and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself" O man thou art under this law. What a great thing it is to believe it. What a law it is. If you do not like the law of England and you are able to effect a change you may change your country and so escape that that is abhorrent to you, but you cannot change your country with regard to this law. No getting away from it. It is God's law. It reigns. It is universal. It takes hold of every man. It wont let any man escape. It will never abate one jot or tittle of its just commandments or demands on man. Its claims are divine, insistent, and inescapable. This is being lost, really lost.

Well dear hearers you are all in this case by nature, and I am also, and a terrible thing it is, think of it. How can God care for a law breaker, how can He look on a law breaker but as on a rebel? How can He speak peace by this law to one who breaks it? How can He allow a man full of sin, breathing sin, acting sin, loving sin, living in sin, to come near to Him? How can He do other than condemn and curse a man under the law? It is written "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" The Apostle had some very terrible apprehension of things when he said "Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men". I

would, if God would use me to this end, be very thankful if I could persuade any poor creature in this chapel that the terrors of the Lord are real. I have known them. The terrors of the Lord are just terrors. The terrors of His majesty, the terrors of justice the terrors of holiness, the terrors of a just claim on a sinner, the terrors of the law that says "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". The terrors of the law that penetrate to the man's affections and says you never loved God, you never gave Him your affections, you never serve Him with your heart. O what a law. O what terrors. O what a God. O what eternity awaits men who are lost, and have no redeemer. What an eternity. A sinner, you live now, it may be, without a thought of God, but let Him tell you this. He has many thoughts of you and He writes your life in a book. He writes your rebellion against Him in a book. He writes your thoughts against Him in a book and what if you die without what is written in that book being blotted out by the blood of Christ? Why in that sad case you will hear read to your tingling ears your life. The wicked are judged out of the other books as if every man's life were written in a several, distinct book and when he comes before his judge then the judge will open the book and read out to him what he did when on earth. How he spent his twenty, thirty, forty, or seventy years always sinning and only sinning, wishing things that were not right, and perhaps often wishing (I did when I was young) wishing there was no God, no eternity, and yet in this book all those things, with their guilt, their turpitude, and the curse attaching to them, will be read out. Well this is being lost. I wish the terrors of the Lord might come down upon us that we might believe in God, that we might believe there is a God in heaven against whom our nature sinned and is ever sinning and can only sin, being utterly depraved and dead. Poor sinner, and I say again, how can God do other than abhor such people, seeing they have not His image but only the image of sin. I wish, I wish that we all lived with a sense of the

Being of God upon us. I wish we all lived with a feeling that we must die and are as water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again; that we lived with a feeling of God's holiness upon us, of His necessary hatred of sin and of the necessity in His nature to punish sin. In the belief that there is a hell for sinners in which there will be a fire in their very being that will never be quenched, a worm in their consciences that will never die. O dear friends do you believe in being ruined? Do you believe that you are lost? Is it with you? Is it as a living truth in your consciences a truth from which you cannot escape by yourselves? Is it so? When it is so really, it makes a man a poor man, a weak man, a trembling man, trembling at God's word. To him it is fearful to live. To him it will be fearful to die. In his apprehension, a man with a conscience with respect to God, finds that he cannot do what he would. What follows being lost here in the respect of which I am speaking of it? What follows it? Hell. Listen my friends, listen to the scripture, "The wicked shall be turned into hell with all nations that forget God" What is hell. Hell is a place to which the ungodly will be condemned, in which they will suffer the just anger of God. Hell is a state, a state of sin, a state of condemnation from which there is no escape. Hell is full of punishment, just punishment. No water to cool the tongue, no friend to alleviate the misery, no hope of escape. It is eternal. You will forget all this probably or wish to forget it, those who have no fear of God before their eyes, but, as far as I am concerned, and I know something of the terrors of the Lord, I will tell you this, it is a fearful thing to be born in sin; it is a fearful thing to live in sin; it is a fearful thing to choose sin, as man does choose sin. Choosing sin rather than God. It is a fearful thing to be under the eye of omniscience and it will be a fearful thing to die in sin. When death comes to you, you wont want to die. If you are in sin you wont want to die, but listen to what the Holy Ghost says by Solomon, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness" He must die.

It is appointed to him to die, and though he says I cannot die like this when he realises that he is going into eternity, he is driven away. Driven from time into eternity. Driven as to his soul from his body for the time being. Driven from his dying bed into an eternity that will never change, in which he wont change. This is being lost, in respect of sin, in respect of the law, in respect of the image of God, this is being lost.

Well it is a dark thing is it not, a black subject, repellent indeed, repugnant, yet it is true. I would not say it, as far as I know my heart, if I did not believe that the Holy Scripture teaches all this, but because it does teach this and because I have to stand in that awful name of God and yet must give an account of my ministry, I must say this to you, that I have said, and may the Lord give you an ear to hear it.

Now let us look just upon the next part of this wonderful word, ere I close. The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. The Son of Man, God incarnate, the Son of Man, God's servant in the covenant, sent to be the salvation of God to the ends of the earth. The Son of Man, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. The Son of Man full of infinite love, because He has the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwelling in Him. The Son of Man, full of the pleasure of God, for it pleased God that that pleasure should be in Him. All fulness, the fulness of God's purpose, the fulness of God's grace, the fulness of God's pity, the fulness of God's law, the fulness of divine holiness, and the fulness of submission to that law. The Son of Man, with an end, a mission, a work. He came; came from heaven from the bosom of His Father; came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; came with the divine purpose even to save that which was lost. Now how can He do it? O if all the angelic hosts were to undertake this they could not accomplish it. How can the Son of Man do it? Well first of all He was

appointed to do it, and God would not appoint an incapable person. Just think of it. His Father appointed Him to do it and His Father, who is infinitely wise, sent one to do it who was capable of doing it. A sinner is capable of being saved, but only when there is a capable Saviour. Jesus is a capable Saviour. I wish we all loved Him on this point, for this reason, capable of saving the lost, and that for two reasons. First because He has the nature of the lost, without the sin. "The children being partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And secondly, being like to the children, He was capable of receiving by imputation their sin. God made Him sin. He imputed sin to Him. The prophet Isaiah speaking hundreds of years before the incarnation of the Son of God said "He hath made our iniquities to meet in Him" O sinner if you have got eyes look at this Person standing in the breach, standing in the sinner's place, becoming willingly and lovingly a surety, understanding what he had to undertake, as a surety, what debts He had to pay, what punishment He had to endure, what death He had to die, what hell He must suffer. With all this before Him, with all this made known to Him in the covenant, He became, willingly and lovingly, he became the surety. Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious, Jesus in the sinner's place. A Saviour to save the lost, a Redeemer to redeem captives, and buy them back at the price of His own blessed life. The Son of Man, O that we knew Him. O that we could love Him, that we could trust Him, and put the case and put out own souls, with all their everlasting interests, into His divine hands, and keeping. How precious are the people to Him whom He came to save. "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Ah when men have grace to consider their latter end, when they have grace to feel their sinfulness, when they have the law in their conscience to condemn them, when they feel and believe that the law must curse them, as it is written "Cursed is

everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" then, then as Jesus Christ is opened, manifested to them, they see something of His worth, they feel the want of Him, they believe in the worth of Him. Now I have spoken thus far. The time is gone, and I must leave it for the moment, but may the Lord follow it up. May you not forget what the scriptures teach about being lost, and mark this, if we rebel against it, if we say we wont take any notice of it, if we say we do not believe it, remember this, that state of mind wont absolve, wont make untrue what is true. May the Lord command His blessing to rest upon us.