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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 27 April 1930

MATTHEW 6 v 10

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven"

The first part of this chapter relates to prayer, to that most solemn exercise of the human mind under the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Nothing in vital religion is so solemn as prayer. It is an approach to God, an addressing of the Infinite One, the coming, according to divine institution, of a sinner to the Saviour; of a dependant to Him who alone is able to supply all the needs of a sinner; of a creature who must live for ever, either in heaven, or in hell, and whose desire is to be fitted by grace, and by the righteousness of Christ, to be God's guest throughout eternity. There is, therefore, no exercise of the mind that can be, for importance, likened to this. This stands alone - prayer. It is not vocal necessarily. It is not local as to a place necessarily. If you pray really, you pray in the Spirit, and that is not to be confined to any place, nor expressed by the lip. It is the language of a soul; it is the expression of the soul's felt need. It is, by the grace of the Spirit, a real expression of the sinner's need, and faith, and hope, and desire before God, and if this be true, we may well ask ourselves whether or no we pray. Nor is prayer disregarded by Him to whom it is offered. He has an open ear. He bows down His ear to hear the prayer that is made. He humbles Himself to behold the things that are upon the earth, and when sinners come despising themselves, as convinced of their fall and ruin, "He listens kindly while they tell, the bitter pangs they feel within". There is much in prayer that God's people find themselves lacking in, and yet they have the substance of prayer when they approach God under the teaching of the Spirit. He helps their infirmities, He dictates petitions, He gives them a sense of their need, He opens the throne of grace to them. He shows them the fullness of Christ. He causes them to perceive that there is no need they can possibly have that Christ is not sufficient for. They are to pray in secret; they are not to make their voice heard in the

synagogues, nor in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men. The loudest prayer may be an abomination; the silent cry is accepted. And when the Lord has given direction in this chapter, as to the manner, as to the place, He tells them then what to say. He tells them what to say. He tells them to lay a humble claim to a singular relationship to God. "Our Father". He is the heavenly Father of all His redeemed children. They do not realise that relationship. They come to realise it by the Spirit of Adoption crying in their hearts, "Abba, Father". But though they do not all realise it, there it is; they are children of the living God. How many of us stand in that singular, that ineffable relationship? Is He your Father? You say, perhaps, we are unusual sinners. If you turn to Jeremiah you will find in one place the Lord accusing His children of grievous sins, yet immediately after the accusation, He says - "Wilt thou not from this time - of my teaching, and dealing with you - cry, Thou art my Father, the Guide of my youth?" When conviction is the keenest, when sorrow for sin is the heaviest, when pain at being contrary to God is most exquisite, then says God, cry from this time, Thou art my Father. (Jeremiah 3 v 4) O what a good God He is. He gives a right to this relationship in the conscience. He gives a sense of it in the heart. So they follow Christ's direction; say, "Our Father". He wont leave a child. No necessity shall kill a child. No need of a child shall go unsupplied. Hunger may for a time afflict him; he may be hunger-bitten, but he shall not die of hunger. "I" says Christ "am the bread of life". No enemy can destroy the relationship or kill the child. "Because I live ye shall live also". May faith in all of us who fear God rise to this height under the power of the Spirit this morning, that we may say, "Abba, Father". Perhaps He chastens some of you, and perhaps it is suggested to you that His chastening is to cut you off. May the Holy Spirit guide you to what is written in the Scripture - "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth". He can make you believe, comfortably, and joyfully believe, that the chastening is a sign of sonship, a token of divine love. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." There is at times a real joy in God's religion. This ineffable relationship of children to a heavenly Father tells us this.

"Hallowed be Thy Name". Honoured be Thy majesty, owned be Thy authority, Thy universal sway. "Hallowed" - in our hearts, hallowed

in our minds and conduct - "be Thy Name". God wont let you play with His Name if you belong to Him. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord in vain". Remember this; this invests prayer with a singular weight and solemnity. I hope the Lord may help us to remember this, and cause us continually to hallow, to honour, His Name.

Then the text - "Thy kingdom come". I had this, as some of you will remember, on Wednesday evening for a subject - "Thy kingdom come" - and among other things I remarked this, that the coming of the kingdom of God to a sinner means destruction. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream had this in it. After the great image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, he saw also a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and this grew and filled the earth, and destroyed all other kingdoms, and made them as chaff driven away by the wind. The kingdom of sin, the kingdom of Satan, the prince of the power of the air, must be, will be, destroyed wherever this kingdom comes. It is an everlasting kingdom. It is the kingdom of the gospel, called the gospel of the kingdom. It is the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God's grace; a kingdom set up in the conscience, in the soul; a kingdom set up by the Spirit, and a warfare is in the matter, for weapons, not carnal, but mighty through God, are used, to the casting down of every imagination, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and the bringing into captivity of every thought unto the obedience of Christ. That is a wonderful kingdom, is it not? God's kingdom, God's authority, the power of grace, the invincible power of the Holy Ghost in a sinner overcoming his sins, bringing forgiveness, preaching justification, setting up the Lord Jesus as it is written in the Psalms by God - "I have set My King upon My holy hill". This is the kingdom. Can you pray for it to come to you? If you have an apprehension of what you are as an opponent of God by nature, an enemy of God, not wishing Him, but saying to Him by all the movements of your hearts - "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" - can you say to Him, in humble prayer, with all that before you - "Thy kingdom come" to me. Set it up in my heart; make me understand what it is to be a subject of Jesus Christ, to have every thought of my mind brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. "Thy kingdom come". When this kingdom comes, eternal blessedness comes. Not for time only is a sinner blessed, but for eternity. "I give unto My

sheep eternal life". When this kingdom comes, protection against all enemies comes. " I give unto My sheep eternal life" and no man can pluck them out of My Father's hand. No man can pluck them out of My hand. "I and My Father are One". When this kingdom comes, good laws come, the law proceeding out of Zion; the law of love, the law of grace, the law of peace, the law of mercy. O, the good laws of this King are sweet laws. Laws of liberty, laws of peace; a divine rule, most benign, comfortable. God smiling, a sinner rejoicing, by occasions, and though this kingdom has enemies all about it, and enemies within it, in the sinner's own fallen nature, divine protection is granted. It is a blessed kingdom, it is a divine dominion, it is to endure for ever.

The second petition in this wonderful prayer is - "Thy will be done". Men with their own wills, men with strong wills, determined wills, resolutely determining to have their own way, such men have grace given to them, and they can pray, and do pray, "Thy will be done". What is the will of God? The divine will is the very essence of God. It is not to be distinguished as something different from God, attributed to Him. It is in His very substance and essence. May we not think otherwise concerning the will of God than that it is Himself. God willing is nothing more nor less than God's own nature moving and purposing. Therefore it must be a right will. It cannot be other than right, since God cannot be other than most eternally pure and just. This will of God is one - He has not two wills - but it is distinguished in Holy Scripture and generally by those who have considered the subject, it is distinguished thus. There is the secret will; there is the revealed will. Moses had this before him when speaking to Israel, giving the law a second time, he said - The secret things belong unto the Lord our God. The revealed things belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all this law. The secret will of God is not the rule by which faith walks. We do not know it, it is not propounded for obedience, but when that will is revealed, as it is revealed in the Scripture, when it is revealed in providence, in the dealings of God with His people, and to the world, then that revealed will, which is but the secret will coming forth, that revealed will is the rule of obedience. That is the sceptre, that is the authority, that is the reason why we should obey. It is God's will. In the Scriptures you have a remarkable word in Leviticus,

where the Lord continually gives directions, and commandments, and the only reason for obedience is this - "I am the LORD". "I am the LORD". All things, because God would have them be - "He hath made all things for Himself". The Apostle Paul in the Romans anticipates an opposition, an objection to this sovereign will of God. If all things are because He wills them; if election stands on the ground of His sovereign will; if He loved Jacob and hated Esau, simply and only because He would; if there were no reasons in either Jacob, to attract and draw out affection; no reasons in Esau to cause God to hate him; thou wilt say then, why does God find fault, for who hath resisted His will? Now what is Paul's answer? By the Holy Spirit he says - "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus?" Is not God righteous? Cannot He do what He will with His own? "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" What have you to say against Him, even though He should say to Pharaoh, for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power on thee. God is righteous. O sinner, mind this. Do not rebel against this awful sovereignty. God is righteous. If He should justify one and condemn you, what have you to reply? He does not owe you justification, does He? What if He should have mercy on your neighbour and leave you without mercy; He does not owe you mercy, does He? He owes nobody any mercy. We are all sinners. We are rightly, justly under condemnation, and God's will disposes of sinners just as it pleases Him. Have you anything to say against this? Have you any objection to make against the Scripture that says - "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy". Dear friends, God is righteous. Man is unrighteous. Now if this righteous God, looking upon unrighteous men, should say, I will have this man for Myself, what objection can be properly raised against that? You say, it is very hard. Why do you reply against God? "Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus?" "Thy will be done". It is an awful word to a sinner who wants to have his own will done, and would fain do it at any cost, to say

from his heart under a teaching divine, under the power of heavenly grace, to say to God, in opposition to himself, Lord let Thy will be done in me, and done by me. The will of God is expressed in the Scriptures. It is expressed to a sinner, both by the Scriptures, and by providence. It is expressed in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Let us look at these points. The will of God is expressed in the Scriptures. These tell us distinctly that God will do His will in the army of heaven and among the children of men; that none can stay His hand, nor say unto Him, what doest Thou? For his pride, Nebuchadnezzar was driven from his throne, deprived of his reason, and for seven years was with the beasts and ate grass as a beast eats grass. At the end of the seven years his reason came back to him, and he then said, God reigns; the Most High reigns and He does His will in the army of heaven and none can stay His hand, nor say unto Him, what doest Thou? Did we ever bend in humble submission to that universal sway, that will of God? Have our hearts said, He is righteous, when our reason could not comprehend, or even believe, what was being done was righteous? It is written that God setteth up one and putteth down another, and He may give you no reason, never tell you why, for He giveth no account of any of His matters. I would that this great truth might be brought to us, to humble us, and close our lips; take from our minds all carnal objections, and enable us to say, It is the Lord; He is a righteous Lord. This gives real religion a great weight in the mind. It brings a mighty subject to the spirit. A holy, eternal God, righteous in His nature, incapable of unrighteousness. And this God is a Sovereign, ruling whether men will have Him to rule or not. Ruling in all the army of heaven and among the children of men. O believer, fall flat as well as you can, fall flat before this great Lord. "Thy will be done". As it is in the Scripture, may we believe it and cry - "Thy will be done" in us.

It is revealed in providence. Here you have God dealing with men. He setteth up one, He putteth down another. God's doing. David is chosen out of all the family. Samuel was not taken in a minute, by the sight of this and that one, but of the seven God said, No; of this, No; of that, No. Are all your sons here, said Samuel? No, there is one left, the youngest, quite negligible; he is feeding the sheep. O, said Samuel, send for him. And then said God, this is he, arise, anoint him. God set him up. This is God's will revealed in

providence. He chose Elijah. Why not another instead? He chose Elisha. The prophets were chosen. Moses was chosen before his elder brother Aaron, to be the leader and commander. Providence now comes to you, it comes to me. Our positions, our standing, our business associations - who made them? Turn to your own cases - who made the things that shape you? that order your steps, that guide you here and there? If you seriously ponder these things, you must conclude - even if you do not believe in God savingly - you must conclude that there was a hand of power, a mind, that shaped these things for you; that though you did not want this you had to have it, and though you would not have gone that way if you could have avoided it, you had to go that way, and who is the author of all this? It was the will of God, the holy will of God. A righteous will; awful when you think you cannot avoid it; that it just comes and you have to be moulded by it and your footsteps ordered by it. And sometimes a child of God can look back to certain circumstances; just a turn here, a movement there, on which hung all his future and he has to say, and does often say in spirit, the Lord moved me then, though I knew it not. My future hung on that step although I had no idea of any consequences. The will of God is revealed in providence. He sends trouble to a family. He bereaves a family. He scatters a family. The will of God. "Sovereign Ruler of the skies", may we adoringly say to Him

Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise,
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.

I have no doubt that some here at times look back on their past days and their movements, and see how singularly they were guided; how strangely they were exercised; how remarkably their steps were ordered to bring to pass in their hearts some heavenly purpose, some divine mercy.

Now in the third place, the will of God is revealed to the church and to individual members of the church. The holy, righteous will of God. This brings the power to a very narrow compass. "Thy will be done". It is done in heaven. Angels do it. Seraphims do with their six wings they use for the glory of God. With two of them they cover

their faces as creatures, as it were, not fit to look on their Creator. With twain of them they cover their feet, conscious of being unfit to stand before their Creator, and with the other two they fly willingly to obey Him. His servants serve Him. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. They are sent to Sodom to pull Lot out of that doomed city. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." They are ministering spirits. And now, poor sinners, come - God brings them - into this; The will of the Lord be done in my case. And it means this, a real submission to the will of God, as that will is revealed, made known. Every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. You take the Object, God Himself, the Object of a sinner's desire. Jesus Christ, all in all. All in salvation. Now a sinner is brought to that - the will of God be done in justification, in sanctification, in redemption, in wisdom, showing the way from hell to heaven. Did you ever come to that by the grace of the Spirit, to say, Lord my heart is in unison with Thy revealed will; that, what Thou hast shown in Scripture and what I see in my spirit I am willing to have done. I would not oppose my will to Thine. I would not set up my way against Thy way. "The will of the Lord be done" in this important matter of salvation. Hold it as fast as you can that this will is a good will. Paul, speaking of that in the Romans, says to them, come out of the world, come away from the world and be not conformed to it, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. That relates to the church of God, and therefore to every individual member of it. That ye may prove by your separation from the world, by your conformity to the image of Christ in the gospel, what is that good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. What is that perfect will of God, and what is that acceptable will of God. Acceptable to me, says the sinner, occasionally. O faith embraces this good will of God. Faith embraces it heartily, warmly, entirely, without objection for the time being. What, has God willed my salvation? Is it true of me, as Paul says in one place, you are ordained to obtain salvation? Then faith lays hold of that. It is a most comfortable persuasion in the heart by the Spirit that you are ordained to obtain salvation with eternal glory. O, it is a comfortable feeling that comes again and again into the mind, that this good will of Him that dwelt in the bush has put you among the children. That the eternal volition of God's heart was

towards you, to embrace and include you in the number of the saved ones. "Thy will be done" as in heaven, so in earth.

This submission to the will of God in the next place enters into the dealings of God with His people. Again let me mention that He setteth up one and putteth down another. Promotion cometh not from the East nor from the West. The will of God does it all. One is poor and another rich. Why, the will of God is done in it. One is robust in health, and another always delicate. Why, the will of God is in it. One has his labour blest, and prospered in every way; another does his utmost and never makes way, as people speak. Why, the will of God is in it. Now when the will of God touches you, when it touches you, either in your person, or in your relations, or in your business, or circumstances, touches you adversely, when it crosses your plans, when it comes right athwart the way you would be walking in, what then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Is there partiality in God? O, if it touches you in some tender place; if He seems to contradict your dearest wishes; if He seems to say in His dealings, I wont bless you in the way you seek to be blest, what then? What need there is of humble submission to this great King, and to say to Him in humble prayer - "Thy will be done". By whom? In whom? By the church; in the whole world. The will of God reigns everywhere, everywhere. Think of one circumstance, the devils that were in the man out of whom they were cast; where they must go. Where they liked? No. Where they wish to go? No. Only where they were permitted to go. So they said, let us go into the herd of swine. This was the will, this was God's will. Deeply humbling, deeply humbling to all men who believe it. But O, how solemn, and how good it is to men who are taught of the Spirit to say in their own circumstances, in their persons, and in their relations, "The will of the Lord be done." There is an apprehension here that God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind. You dear young people, let me address a word here to you. You have your plans; young people have; they anticipate the future. They want to do this, they purpose doing that, The Holy Ghost anticipates this spirit and He says, you say you will go into this city and dwell there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. That is not a good spirit; it takes in the ways of men. Says James, that is not right. You ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and we will do this, or we will do that. If you persist in the course He rebukes. He says, all such

glorying is vain, it is sinful. Now think upon it, and God help you to think upon it. There is a great will - God willing - in heaven, and all your steps, and all your ways, and all your doings are under the control of that will. The hand of God is on men. Some know it to their joy, though they are pained in their circumstances. Some know it to their mortification. Now I wish the Lord may give you young people grace to realise your position. Creatures; pieces, or as the word is, lumps of clay in the hands of a divine Potter to take what shape He will have it, and to contain what He will put in it. We are before a mighty subject, and I would keep this before you; may you believe it. This will of God is righteous; He cannot do but what is right. Think of it, and God help us all who know the Scriptures by reading them; all here who hear me now, may He help all of us to say from the heart - "Thy will be done". As it is in heaven, unquestioningly, willingly, lovingly, and readily, so may it be done on earth by men. By men; two classes of men. Good men, who want to do it; though they are opposed by the flesh, they want to do it. If it be a disagreeable way they would fain walk in it believing it to be right. Good men want to do this will and have it done in them. And ungodly men do it without knowing it. And if they see they must do this because they cannot avoid it, they are not willing. There is no willingness in them except grace put it there. Dear friends, in conclusion let me say this to you; this will is righteous, this will is universal, this will cannot be resisted. This will will be holy and shine in its intrinsic holiness even when we, opposing it as we may, have to come down and say, we cannot help ourselves. We are poor, miserable, fallen creatures, but this great, this controlling will must be done. May the Lord forgive us our rebellion, strong wishes, and determinations to have our own way; nothing but rebellion against this will of God. May the Lord help you and help me to believe that this will is righteous, that God cannot lie. He cannot do but what is right, is ever righteous, ever good, ever just, and whatever happens to, or befalls a creature, the Lord's will must be done, and may it be the prayer of our hearts - "Thy will be done."

AMEN.