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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 11 October 1922

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"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,
neither is there any divination against
Israel: according to this time it shall
be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath
God wrought!"

Israel was now a people separated by God. He had been from eternity in the counsel and purpose of God. He came forth in Isaac and from Isaac coming God loved Jacob. From him there came and went into Egypt 72 souls; there they lived 400 years; their seed multiplied exceedingly; God was with them. Difficulties, troubles, weaknesses and many other things came upon them. They were slaves; Pharaoh was against them; all the strength of Egypt. Untrained in arms, unaccustomed to warfare, a poor, distraught, groaning people, Israel was at that time and, according to God's promise and word to Abraham, the time came for them to be delivered out of the iron furnace and God, as has always been the case, was ready with an instrument to bring them out, even Moses. And with a stretched out arm and a mighty hand and signs and wonders God brought them out, greatly enriched. They were brought before the Red Sea and brought through it as on dry land. They came into thirst and hunger and God was with them to provide bread and water for them. Now their wars and their dangers began, and they had to fight. And Balak sought their destruction and Balaam, an unwilling servant of the Most High, was made to utter some of the greatest gospel truths that the Bible has. Balaam, a prophet who loved the wages of unrighteousness, was made as the mouth of God, and this is one of his sayings. Balaam had used divinations and enchantments and was still to use them, going here and there, trying to change the mind of God, even as the mind of a false god might be changed, and what he would not have said if he could have had his own way, he was made to utter, even the blessings of God upon Israel to the utter dismay and annoyance of Balak, so that at last he was sent back to his home without the honour and rewards

that had been promised him. This was the literal happy, sinful people of whom this word was first uttered. It has a spiritual significance. The people were typical and the truths uttered typical, and leaving the literal part, it is the spiritual part, the anti-typical part of the word that I would, as the Lord may help me, speak to a little.

Jacob and Israel after the Spirit. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is circumcision in the flesh". God has promised to circumcise the hearts of His people. "He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God." According to this time of Jacob's danger, apparent danger, it must have been said, was said, is still said: "What hath God wrought!" What, these feeble people, dwelling in tents, unaccustomed to war, these poor people who have just been murmuring and incurring the displeasure of God; these people, stand against all the power of Balak, of the Moabites, and the Ammonites, and the nations round about them? Ah, but their Captain was with them. The Captain of the Lord of Hosts stood by them and therefore all that Balaam attempted was useless. His will was against them, his love of the wages of unrighteousness was against them, but their God was for them, and Balaam's polluted tongue, the tongue he would have used, and still more polluted if God had allowed him to curse the people, is made an instrument of blessing. He blesses the people altogether. Now spiritually, "What hath God wrought! to make some of us, as we hope, His children? That is the first thought I would bring before you. What has God wrought in making some here His children? His from eternity in election in the covenant of grace, in union with Christ. His in a divine purpose, holy, and without blame before God in love. Loved with the same love wherewith Christ was loved eternally. In Christ by union as the wife is in the husband by a divinely appointed union; as the branch is in the vine by a natural union, so the election of grace has ever been with God, a people. But we were born in sin, we were shapen in iniquity. There was nothing ^{is} in us to merit esteem or give the Creator delight. Nothing but sin, nothing but the love of sin. Dark ignorance, bitter enmity, dreadful death, awful alienation from God. This was our best, this was our all, as we were born. But the day came, and some of us can remember, perhaps others cannot because it

was not so clear a work with them, but the day came when divine life was imparted, breathed into the soul by the eternal Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What a day that was! When Israel came out of Egypt the Lord said the month was to be called Abib, a springing, a green thing springing out of the earth, a new nation born, and when a sinner is born it may be said that day has that name, Abib, a new springing, a new life, something budding, something growing, convictions of God's being and justice, of God's claims on us, and convictions of sin arising from that conviction of God. Convictions that we were wrong and could not make ourselves right. Such convictions came; they were lodged in us and no devil, no enchantment, no deceptions, no promises of good here, no temptations to go into this old pleasure and to seek that good thing that had been good in days of unregeneracy had any effect to kill this life. Nature here said in us you had better do that thing but the life stopped it. Life stopped wrong. You cannot do the things that you would if divine life is in you. Life is sure to stop evil and if it be a holy life it will spring up in holy desires after God. "What hath God wrought"! to make some people in this chapel Christians?

I think I grow more and more in love with that name, Christian. It is in reality a most expressive and full and beautiful name. If it belongs to any of us it may be said: "What hath God wrought!" to make pieces of hell true Christians, to make enemies real friends, to make aliens poor, needy, happy reconciled sinners; to make the guilty just; to have Jesus Christ revealed and formed in the heart the hope of glory. This is to be a Christian. It is not to take up a profession of this or that form of religion. It is to be the subject of a divine work in the soul, the subject of divine teachings, operations and therefore the subject of living motions, gracious desires, fervent petitions, indellible impressions of God and of sin. What hath God wrought! Perhaps some of you would not like to be called Christians. To be sure, everybody is a Christian. Christendom is a very wide term, just simply a geographical expression, but it may deceive myriads of people. Christendom and being a Christian are wonderfully different. We are born in Christendom, but we were not born in the kingdom of God. We were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, dead in trespasses and sins, and that was our best. That was really our best. "What hath God wrought!" in the forgiveness of sins? What is the

foundation of the forgiveness of sins? The death of Christ. Thus in the new covenant, "what hath God wrought" to make a guilty person just, a polluted person pure, a deformed person upright? "What hath God wrought" in the forgiveness of sins? Poor, sinful creature, if you are convinced of sin, you will never really rest till this marvellous thing is wrought in you and you can say of yourself what here Balaam said of Israel: "What hath God wrought!" All the fears, all the temptations, all the sinkings of your heart, all the carnality of your mind, all the enmity and ignorance and blindness and wanderings shall never keep out this designed blessing when the time arrives. O that it might come now, for you to hear that word "Thy sins are forgiven"; to hear that word: "I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud" - and you have been under that cloud and may be now under it in feeling, as a thick cloud - "and as a cloud thy sins. Return unto Me for I have redeemed thee". That day will be a beginning of years to you, a new life in your feelings, a new knowledge of God, a new experience of His love, a new feeling that you are not a stranger to Him nor a foreigner with respect to the church, but a fellow citizen of the household of God. "What hath God wrought!"

"What hath God wrought!" to keep us alive, and to keep our hearts bent toward Himself? We know what it is to have a whole army against one little feeling, against one leaning; a whole army. Who can name all the corruptions of nature? The unbelief of nature, the temptations of the devil, the allurements of your positions, the world. That is to say there are nets that you may find just about you; the dangling before your eyes of some tinsel as a little real gold. Who can say how many there are? Why, their name is legion. And as against this there is just a flicker, a desire, expressing itself sometimes thus: O, if I were but right. If God were but mine. O, if I were His child, His subject. If He would but bless me; if He would only grant me to realise union with His dear Son, Jesus Christ; what more could I ask? What keeps that flickering desire, that little life, ready to go out, to be blotted out by the sin that is within you and the things which come against you, what keeps it alive? O, says Christ "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". You will keep on your knees with this life. You will live on your knees with this life and never rise till you say,

the Lord has come. Of course, you know, I only say that word metaphorically, because it is the heart's kneeling that is the thing. You might kneel until your knees were hard and never utter a breath of prayer to God, but if your heart kneels before the Lord, if your spirit bows and bends to Him by the power of the Holy Ghost in you, I say that is it and it is the fresh supply of the Spirit of Christ that keeps that alive. God shine on His work in us that we may see it; then we shall say "What hath God wrought!" Here I am a poor professor and I have been like this so long. I have feared often that my little hope would go right out and I should altogether be like the disciples of whom it is said: "They went back and walked no more with Him", but I am kept on, kept going. Is not it wonderful to be a Christian and is it not wonderful to be kept one? I mean in your own experience. O, to have escaped the dreadful corruptions of nature is no little thing; to have escaped some peculiar temptations is no trifle. To have escaped some violent attack of the enemy, some awful uprising of infidelity, some terrible voice in you saying, there is no God. To have escaped such things is no little thing. "What hath God wrought!" Why, Balak and Balaam in their opposition to Israel were just like a faint breath as compared with the opposition of sin and the devil, that the Lord's people have to meet with from time to time. And I am certain of this, if we were more godly, had more life in our souls, we should have a good deal more trouble from Satan and from indwelling sin than we have. The reason that it is comparatively easy with us at times, the reason that we get on so comfortably to speak, as is the truth occasionally, is this, that we have so little love in our souls, so little grace in exercise, so little of the Spirit of Christ, such short supplies of the Spirit of Christ. Why, take any day of your own lives, when you are not under the anointing of the Spirit, and you will at once see the truth, and feel it perhaps, of what I say. Rise in the morning and perhaps you feel some wish the Lord would bless you. You go downstairs, you open your letters; something annoys you or something pleases and gratifies you. The one or the other may keep fast hold of you and scarcely anything through the day lives in you but that. Do not I speak the truth as to some of you? And if it is so, is the secret of it that you have so little grace or little life in your souls? Why are you so quickly caught by the world? Because there is so little of Him in you who said: "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world". Still, for all that, and it is not

little - it is to be much abased and much deplored - but for all that, it may be, it must be said of us "What hath God wrought!" to keep them going. And when some of you younger people get old and grey-headed you will say we did not half enter into what the minister said then. We only knew a little. It was like the being the month Abib, just the bud and the green thing appearing, but now it is very different with us. I did not half know myself fifty years ago, did not half know my sins. I did not half know the goodness of God. I know very little now, but it must be said "What hath God wrought!" to keep a sinner on his feet, to keep a Christian on his knees, to keep his eyes on Christ crucified, to keep his heart and hope there and nowhere else; to blot out, from time to time, from his vision the world and, what is worse to him than all the world, namely himself. To be saved from that wicked person, self; "What hath God wrought!" My dear brethren it would become us, so to speak, to leave off everything now and fall flat on our faces and bless a good God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, for keeping our faces toward Himself all these years.

"What hath God wrought!" in giving some spiritual knowledge of the person of Christ. If professors were their own judges there would not be much ignorance of Christ among them but if we are to judge of the knowledge of Christ by the fruits which come from Him, then what shall we say of ourselves? What is it to know Christ? It is to have a revelation of Him. It is to have Him set before you, before your eyes evidently crucified among you. It is to have the mystery which has been hid from all ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, even Gentiles, namely "Christ in you the hope of glory". It is for you sometimes to be able to, as Hart speaks, descend into your heart and find your Saviour there. Ah sinner, it is a great deal if your faith is sometimes directed to even where Christ is and you are led to say, my hope is in Him. But when the day comes to you to lay your hand on your heart and say, my Saviour is here; I bear my treasure about with me; I carry all my wealth in my heart that will be a very great day. And is it not wonderful that this knowledge of Christ is never acquired but always imparted. You cannot get it; it is given. You cannot work yourself into it nor think yourself into it nor read yourself into it, nor hear preaching into it, but it is a matter that is given, really, truly given. And may I say, by the way,

one word here. If that is so, is it not a matter for encouragement for those of us who feel so ignorant that the word does not say we must go over the sea to bring it to us, nor go into the depths to fetch it up, nor rise into the heavens to bring it down, but that it is to be this: "The word is nigh thee in thy heart". Is not the Holy Ghost able to bring this knowledge to us? Yes, none else can. There is no other teacher can do it. He does it; He brings Christ into the heart and forms Him there, the hope of glory. And if, when you sometimes are seeking your evidences, this comes right up and you say, here are my evidences, namely here in my very soul and heart is Jesus Christ, and on Him is fixed my hope and I look to Him to bring me through, bring me honourably to my grave, that will be a very sweet moment to you. "What hath God wrought!" in making His Word over to a sinful man? "What hath God wrought!" to give any poor, wretched Gentile dog a Word of life and promise. There are some people here who have had it. O yes, although the devices of the enemy and the wiles of the devil may be to bring us to question very closely whether we ever had a word, yet it will bubble up sometimes, come right into the memory and into the hand of faith, as it were, again and you will say, why, this is what the Lord said to me at such a time. This is what He gave me and I had then such a shining of it in my heart that I did verily believe it was His Word to me. "What hath God wrought!"

Now take, just very briefly, two or three points which we may see growing out of the type. "What hath God wrought!" in giving these wandering pilgrims, with no city as yet to dwell in, bread? They were hungry and they had no means of having bread, no earthly supply and therefore God glorified Himself by raining every day during the rest of their journey, Manna from heaven. On that they lived; that sustained them. What have you had? The bread of life, the holy gospel of Jesus Christ, the glorious gospel of God, the blessed God. Now a Psalm, now a verse of a Psalm or a piece of the Word. Some heavenly direction turning your eyes and heart and thoughts and love and faith to the blessed God of all goodness and grace. Now a word to reprove you, much needed, and yet that very reproof is nourishment. Now a word of promise to sustain your faith and enable you to say, the Lord will help me.

David's Lord and Gideon's Friend
Will help His servant to the end

Is it not wonderful? Here is a Bible full of goodness, of beauty, of love, of promises and you may read it through ever so many times in a year and not get a single word into your heart. But if you be a Christian, a child of God, and be begging for a crumb of bread to nourish your faith and keep you alive, the Lord will drop some word one day as you are reading. Mind you, it is a good thing to be reading the Word of God. Often some word will drop on your spirit and you will say, this is different from mere reading. There is life in this, there is truth, there is power, there is unction in this. This is what God does. "What hath God wrought!" O, thanks be to His Name, He is not always a silent God. You may not have many big things to speak about, but if you be the Lord's you will have something to say about His voice. Something has come, some whisper you have heard, some touch you have felt, some inshining has come and God has been great therein. These people were thirsty and there were no springs rising and sending their living, sweet streams to them. They were thirsty and they wished themselves back in Egypt - foolish people, even as we are - and what did God do? O, He smote, by Moses, the rock and out of the flinty rock water gushed out and supplied them, quenched their thirst the rest of their journey. That Rock, says Paul, was Christ. And have you not had it? And if you have had it, "What hath God wrought!" He smote Jesus Christ; He smote Him with the sword of justice; He smote Him with divine anger; He smote Him with a fearful frown; He smote Him with a heart-piercing desertion and out of that smiting came the living water of eternal love, eternal truth, and the everlasting gospel, and that has reached some. What a thing it is to drink the water of life, Jesus Christ. "What hath God wrought!" Who would say he deserved it? No child of God. He says it is a wonder that it ever comes to me, seeing I am so base. What did God do for these people? He defended them. Og, king of Bashan, and all the kings and enemies who came against them whilst in the wilderness, these were overcome. God smote their enemies; hip and thigh He smote them from time to time. And I have thought that God had an intention, a great intention in bringing Israel out of Egypt unprepared, unused to war, no weapons, no trading, no prowess, no courage, no endurance. All

these things were lacking. What was God's intention? O, why, this. That they should say: God is our defence; God is our Shield; He is our sword; He is our victory. And is not this spiritually the case? God indeed has provided an armour and a sword, but it is not many of us that have skill to use it and even if we do we should still have to say this - He gives us the strength to use it; He gives us the wisdom. He taught our hands to war and our fingers to fight and by Him we have run through a troop; by Him we have leaped over a wall; so that we shall say - "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake". No enchantment, no devil, no council in the gates of hell, no wisdom of men, no opposition of science falsely so called, shall catch and destroy these people. Balak saw them from an eminence; there they were, a people dwelling in the valley in their tents, a weak people, and he saw them, if I may use the expression, he saw them covered by God Himself, protected by divinity, protected by the promise of God and the oath of God and the covenant of God covering them and surrounding them, a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night protecting and guiding these blessed people. Well, my dear friends, can you spiritually join in this word? Balaam's polluted lips uttered it, but it came straight from God, a pure word, a blessed word. "What hath God wrought!" Here is a feeble people and yet there is no enchantment of king and the false prophet and the devil can have any effect upon them. No divination which Balaam went to seek to use against them had any effect to their destruction. They were just under the protection of God. My friends, the covenant of grace covers every child of God; the promise of God covers every pilgrim; the goodness of God covers every sinner; the righteousness of Christ justifies every unjust person for whom He wrought that robe and the faithfulness of God brings up the rear of the Lord of Hosts. Who then shall overcome these, so favoured people? "What hath God wrought!" I might add. "What hath God wrought!" in His providence; that providence that has shaped our course, that providence that has not consulted our delicate feelings always. That providence that has hedged our way up with thorns and if the hedge of thorns was not enough then hedged the way with a wall of hewn stones, so that, bent on destroying ourselves as we were, we were not able to find the path that leads to destruction. Did you ever fret and rebel against a certain yoke? Were you ever wicked enough to say you would not take it up and carry

it? And did the Lord show His love by being determined with you, determined that you should carry, and not only be determined, but with the determination give you grace to take it up and carry it. "What hath God wrought!" Providence and grace uniting to humble you and bless you. "What hath God wrought!" in supplies. It does not matter if the brook Cherith dries and if the ravens cease to carry food to a hungry, thirsty prophet because God has a widow woman ready to sustain him, and the widow woman had not a barrel full of meal and a cruise full of oil, but just a little meal left with which she was to make a cake and a little oil with which she should make it. And thus, because starvation was before her, and that prophet was to be sustained by that widow out of that empty barrel, out of that dry cruise, what did God work then? Do you know something about supplies coming, stores opened, window of heaven opened, God sending supplies. "What hath God wrought!" in giving submission to His will when that will has troubled you, when He has sent trouble into your house, and into your heart and into your circumstances, and has brought you to say from your heart: "Thy will be done". O what grace that is. Perhaps you have said, well I felt I had no will, because the Lord had brought your will, so mercifully brought your will, into unison with His will. It is a mighty conquest when a man's will is brought to God's will. It is a wonderful victory when a sinner says, I would not have my own way if I could. When he says, I would not shape my own course if the Lord told me I might. If He referred things to myself I feel I would refer them back to Him. "What hath God wrought!"

One word more, we are very limited in our view; our horizon is not a distant one. It is very limited, as the Lord expresses it by that word "What shall we eat, what shall we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Said He: "Take no thought for the things of the morrow". Well, if you are not to think of tomorrow, what are you to think about? Eternity. If He takes your eye from tomorrow and fixes it on eternity, that is the great thing, is it not? What is there to see in eternity, says the carnal mind? Nothing in you as you are. God can give you a new heart and a right spirit; then you will see there is something in eternity. What does faith want to look at, because she does want to look at eternal things. What is it she wants to look at? A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The throne of God

where the Father is, and the Son, and the eternal Spirit. The courts of heaven vaulted with light and love. Faith peers into that and says in the heart, hope in God, look to Him, He will bring you through; He will bring you there. Look to Him. There is enough in Him for you, enough grace, and patience and love and merit and mercy and power and faithfulness. Look to Him. My brethren, He will bring you there. If He has put a living hope in you He wont bring that hope to disappointment. He could not do it. When there was danger, apparently, of Israel being destroyed by an angry God, what said Joshua : "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great Name?" (Joshua 7 v 9). And when the Lord looked at His own glory He said, "Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high and the Lord hath not done all this" (Deuteronomy 32 v 27). His character is involved in this; He will bring you through.

Is He thy God? He'll bring thee through

and the line before it is

Is He a Sun? On thee He'll shine

and that means heaven. Heaven is in Christ; heaven is in doctrine; heaven is in grace. Grace in the bud will burst forth one day into glory, and then will the people say "What hath God wrought!" to bring us here, to bring us away from a poor world of sin and woe and trouble; to bring us from what was worse than that, a world of wickedness in our hearts. To bring us from unbelief and hardness of heart and ingratitude and to bring us into this world of light and beauty and glory and satisfaction where we can praise Him without interruption. What hath He wrought! It is expressed in the Revelation: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.