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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 17 July 1921

PSALM 102 v 27

"But Thou art the same and Thy years shall
have no end"

The eternity of God is beyond comprehension, but that there is a God who is eternal, may be believed and is believed, believed implicitly. He by faith is apprehended. By faith He is loved, trusted, hoped in. By faith His people perceive that, though the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the heavens be rolled up as a scroll; though their own personal things shall pass away - families die, husbands be removed and widows left, and so on - there is one who is sufficient for them in all circumstances; whose fulness shall supply them; whose love shall comfort them; whose power shall sustain them; whose wisdom shall guide them; and finally, whose heaven shall receive them. "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

In speaking to you again a little time on this, so solemn and great word, I wish in the first place to speak of the covenant of grace in which the perfections of God and the whole plan of salvation are to be found. Before entering on this great subject let me make a remark with regard to the very bottom and ground of it. One, Elisha Coles, before speaking of election, said that he found the only bottom and foundation that would bear the weight of that doctrine was divine sovereignty. God is a Sovereign; it belongs to Him to be sovereign. Divine Sovereignty is an awful and awe inspiring subject. It is objective to faith and it becomes a subjective truth when revealed by the Holy Ghost. By divine sovereignty I understand God's infallible and absolute right to do what He will, to create or refrain from creating; to choose and to reprobate; to love and to hate; to justify and condemn; to give heaven to some and reserve others for hell; and because this perfection is proper to Him it is holy. God in His sovereignty can do no wrong. What He wills is right; what He does is best; what He refrains from doing is good. Everything in Him -

every purpose in Him, every act done by Him must be right, because done by God. We may well tremble before this awful truth, and we may indeed say it is a maul on the head of our pride. Who willingly, being a sinner, can submit to it? Who will love it? What man, in his natural state, can love it? But if we fight against it, this is true, we only hurt ourselves. We cannot reach Him; we cannot touch His right. We only hurt ourselves. Listen my friends, God is good. That embraces everything. There is none good but One, that is God. Now this sovereignty then is the foundation of God's works, both in creation, in providence and in salvation's great and all comprehensive scheme. It is therefore the foundation of the covenant of grace. Inside the covenant of grace is the whole of salvation, from the Person of the Saviour to every saved sinner. The provisions of the covenant, of the wisdom and the love and the power of God, exercised in the constitution of the covenant, in the constitution of Him who sealed the covenant with His Own blood, we have here. There are in covenants always contracting parties, two or more. Covenants are very ancient instruments between man and man. You have them very early in the Scriptures and very early you find God making a covenant with Abraham and these covenants were ratified. There was a covenant of salt and that national covenant was never to lack the salt of it. And we read of the royal covenant with David. "I have made a covenant with My chosen". "I have exalted one chosen out of the people". And this is brought to Christ with whom the covenant is made. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is in Thee, and My words which I have put in Thy mouth, shall not depart out of Thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." And there is a Person, the Third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, who witnesses to this covenant, as says Paul - "Whereof", speaking of the covenant that God said He would make, the second covenant "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us" (Hebrews 10 v 15) We have then Three Persons in the covenant who are contracting parties. It must be so. Not one party can be dispensed with; not one Person in the Trinity can be dispensed with. The Father's part in the covenant is the choice and gift of His Son to the Church. He gave His only begotten Son. What an amazing thing is this, that there should be a contract between the Father and the Son; that in the fulness of

the time appointed by them the eternal Son should become incarnate, should assume the nature of those He was to redeem. It was necessary; He could only redeem people whose nature He had in union with His divine Person. Therefore He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. It was necessary, I say, in order to their redemption for, as man sinned, only man could redeem, and that Man must be united to the Person of God, the second Person in the Trinity. And the contract on the part of the Son was that He would, in the fulness of time come. Hence His word in the Psalms, which is quoted in the Hebrews - "Lo I come". "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not"; Thou didst not desire. "Then said I, Lo I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." And we know from the Scripture that Christ did come, that He was born of the virgin Mary. A third party in the covenant is the Holy Ghost who contracted to come to that Man Christ Jesus and be in Him without measure. He was given to Christ without measure. God giveth not the Spirit to Him by measure, and He was in Him in that ^{manhood} ~~human nature~~, qualifying, enabling ^{Him} ~~it~~ in all ^{His} ~~his~~ work, under all ~~the~~ burdens. He was in Him as the Spirit of wisdom and counsel and might and of the fear of the Lord. He made Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. The second Person, thus qualified - Jesus Christ, thus qualified - came to do and did the work which His Father gave Him to do, and all of it is in that word - "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father". And when He was about to fulfil that great commandment He said - "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do". And so on Calvary's cursed tree He said "It is finished" and dismissed His spirit and went to heaven. Here is the covenant. There are divine Persons in it and poor sinners in it; sinners of the deepest dye, the blackest possible hue; sinners whose guilt is as black as the confines of hell, whose hearts are enmity against God and whose understandings are darkness and whose wills are full of rebellion; who say, in every motion of their fallen nature, to God - Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. These sinners, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, high and low,

Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free are in the covenant. This was represented to Peter in that vision which He had given to him - a great sheet let down from heaven, knit at the four corners, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowl of the heavens. Clean and unclean, as to all earthly distinctions, typical of that great distinction between one nation and all other nations, Jew and Gentiles, all mixed together in that covenant and called clean. Called clean by God to show Peter that God would call Gentiles as well as Jews. What a great thing it is to be in this covenant. It doubtless is the chief concern of those who are born again to be told by God that they are in it. The works of God may be seen in creation and something of His eternal power and Godhead may be apprehended as the works of creation are seen, but this covenant, being in God, made by Him in the counsel of peace, is a matter of pure revelation. No heart could conceive it; no mind could think of it. It could not be taken in at all except it were revealed. It is a matter of pure revelation and so, as to whether we are in it or not, is a matter of revelation. You may have many marks of a Christian. The Lord's people may look at you and say to you in their kindness, and wish to encourage you. You might have many evidences of being born again, of belonging to God; many evidences that the Holy Spirit is in you, but you will want, in addition to that, the testimony of God. You will want what Paul speaks of - "Whereof" he said "the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us". That witness you will seek; that witness is necessary to peace and joy in God.

And this covenant endures. It is called an everlasting covenant. God makes it, and in a very blessed and important sense He makes this covenant with people, with His people. He makes it with them when He takes hold of them and brings them to His dearly beloved Son, and they by faith hang on Christ, receive the Son of God into their hearts, and He presents them to the Father, and the Father enters into a covenant with them. So that comes to pass that is written. It shall be said - They are My people, where it was said, they are not My people. And indeed also it is true that they make a covenant with God. "Gather my saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." They enter into covenant. They by precious faith receive the Lord; by faith enter into into a

covenant with Him and shall say, each one in his time "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength" Now this is one of the great points that I would bring before you with regard to the duration of God, "Thou art the same". It was a consolation to David in the midst of difficulties and troubles, the passing away from him of all things, and the lack of that unity in his family which he had desired. "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire though He make it not to grow." We must experience change here. We must have tribulation according to the promise of Christ. Things pass away; earthly props are removed; health decays; substance vanishes; riches make to themselves wings in many cases and fly away. When it is so with the saints the one consolation that they have is that they are bound in the bundle of life with the Lord their God. He comes and tells them so, tells them that when they pass through the waters He will be with them, and through the rivers they shall not be over^{er}flown, and when they walk through the fire they shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon them, for He, the Lord their God, is with them. They are held fast there. The provisions of the covenant are brought to them. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Dear friends, there is nothing stable in a perishing, shifting world. There is nothing immovable which the saints have when they look upon all their own things, and when believing the truth of God, that we must needs die and be as water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. There is something that the Spirit brings to them. He shows them God in His immutable covenant; God in this covenant relationship. He will undertake for them in all their matters, guide them through their difficulties, sustain them under their burdens, and bless and sanctify to them their sorrows. Therefore we may say - "Thou art the same". It was a consolation to the Psalmist as he looked upon the world, yet to perish. "Thou remainest". All things here that are created shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them and they shall be changed. O build no hopes here; build no expectations on either yourselves or your friends or your substance. If you do you will be let into trouble. Unquestionably you will learn what folly it was to

build on that, the stability of which you ought to know is only like a shifting cloud. Build not on clouds my friends, but on God; a covenant making, covenant keeping God, who performs His will, does His will in the armies of heaven and among the children of men; whose hand none can stay and to whom none can properly say "What doest Thou?"

Thou art the same in the covenant. This wraps people up; this secures them. All the changes they experience in their souls and in their circumstances affect not this unchangeable covenant. With David's Lord and ours there is a covenant made. There are many things in it, infinite blessings and time blessings, and one blessing is the rod. "I will visit their transgressions with the rod". Doubtless God's people come in time, each one, to thank God for using a rod, the rod of correction to drive folly from their hearts. It is either when you can say you have no folly in your heart, or that there is no folly in your conduct, that you may expect to be free of the rod. But so long as folly is in you, so long as you manifest it, and so long as God loves you - and He will do that eternally - so long must you look for the rod. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". No good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly before Him in faith. "Thou art the same". Men may deal treacherously, but then if you say that of any man with regard to yourself, perhaps the Lord will say to you, "Thou hast dealt very treacherously with Me." And if He should do it, two things will happen in your heart. First, you will cease to complain of men, and second you will cease to rebel against God. You will acquiesce in what He is doing.

The covenant has all necessary provision. Let me name one or two things in it. First, the blood that seals it; the blood of the everlasting covenant. And this produces peace of conscience, peace with God, acceptance in the Beloved, a title to heaven, sweet union to the Saviour, and joy. Without shedding of blood is no remission and without sprinkling of blood is no peace. Guilt on the conscience is a troublesome companion. I wish all of you had it. Some of you have never had it and if you die without it you will not go to heaven, for you will die without conviction and in that case you will die without one of the promised works of the Holy Ghost. He shall convince of sin.

But if you have guilt, then you have trouble. If you have guilt then you will want the blood of Christ and you will get it; yes, you will have it. How the Spirit will bring it. The Holy Spirit will bring that precious blood and sprinkle it on your guilty heart. He will take no notice of your objection against yourself. You may say, looking at yourself, I cannot perceive one mark of a child of God in me or about me. They repent, but I am hard; they believe, but I am full of unbelief; they love, but I am full of enmity; they fear God, but I am bold in sin, although I would not sin if I could help it. You may say, I have not an evidence of possessing grace. I cannot pray, though I try; I can do nothing right. Well, I would not contradict you. I do not think it is part of a minister, when hearing objections, to contradict them. I would allow every one of them, and I would allow further, if you should say, I have not expressed the half of what is in me of wickedness. I would believe it, and indeed if you said you had expressed all, I should think you were deceived about yourself in that particular. I would allow every objection; and then what? Condemn you? No, poor sinner, I would say, "Behold the Lamb of God". See the suffering Saviour on the cross; hear His dying word "It is finished". Finished law, finished wrath, swallowed up hell, conquered the devil. All, all, all that is necessary for acceptance with God, for peace in your conscience, for marks of grace, for evidences of being born again, all you will find brought to you when the blood of sprinkling is on your conscience. If you could get what you want and, by getting what you want, remove your own doubts and objections and fears, you would bring some of the flesh into the covenant, but that won't do; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Beware of trying, even perhaps unconsciously to yourself at times, to add something to Christ. It is not to be done. Set your briars and thorns against Christ, but do not turn them into twine wherewith to unite yourself to Him. Set your briars and thorns against Him, that is, bring up your objections, and I will tell you what He will do with them. According to Isaiah, He will go through them. He will burn them up and bless you. Yes, He will bless you. "Let Him take hold of My strength and make peace with Me and he shall make peace with Me." This then is one of the blessings of the covenant. The death of the Testator ratified the contract and the blessings of the covenant therefore flow freely down into the hearts

prepared for them. Prepared, not as they imagine they should be, but prepared by a sense of ruin, of wickedness, of every evil thing. Ah, but one says, there is a point you have not taken up. And what is that? I have no repentance. Well, allow that you have no repentance. Perhaps you have some and are unaware of it, but allow that you have no repentance. If you had repentance what would you do with it? Take it to God and ask Him to bless you on that ground? Take it in your hand to the market of free grace, as a penny to buy something with? Take it as that with which you would have Him well-pleased? Well, if you did, would He look at it? He will be verily pleased with your repentance when it flows from the atonement felt, but He will never be pleased with your repentance when you offer it to Him as something that He should take at your hand for which He should bless you. We are not good logicians in experience often. If I were to say to you - now you do want God to bless you because of your repentance - but as a matter of truth in your heart there is that secret thing - if I had this, then I could go to God. If I had that, then I might hope. If I were more toward instead of being so intensely untoward, then I think He would bless me. There is a subtlety in it that we do not readily believe. It is hard to be lost. But Christ came to save the lost. Ah it is hard to be stripped, but there is only room for a naked, lost soul, to go through the eye of a needle. In the covenant there are blessings that are spoken of in the Hebrews - the teaching of God. "They shall no more say every man to his neighbour 'Know the Lord' for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them." Every man that has learned of the Father cometh to Me, says Christ. You learn of the Father through the Spirit what you need. You learn of the Father what Christ is, what He has done, what He is doing. How He shed His blood, how He wrought a righteousness, how He entered heaven with His own blood. How He lives there to intercede for His children to learn these things. And this teaching is in the covenant. They shall no more say to one another, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know Me. I will teach them. And further there is the sweet forgiveness of sins in it. "For I will forgive their sin and remember their iniquities no more for ever". The atonement must be in the covenant. Dear friends the atonement is not an after thought. It is a part of and inside that which is greater, for a part is not as great as the whole, and the whole of the covenant has in it the atonement, and the adoption and the

peace of God and the joy of the Holy Ghost.

"Thou art the same". Changelings, God remains. Afflicted saint, looking with grief at the loss of some things, looking with apprehension and fear at the threatened loss of other things, look at this; God give grace to look at this. "Thou art the same". This stands, this remains. It is called the covenant of life and peace. Now this life is eternal; this life is in Christ. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" and this life secures all the Lord's people. "Because I live ye shall live also". Is it not your aim to get to heaven? Is it not your aim to win Christ who is our life? What a great aim you have.

This covenant is a covenant of peace. Peace? Well, peace is good if it is a good peace. I think it would be a blessing for some of you to lose your present peace. It would be a blessing if you became troubled, really troubled. Troubled because of sin; troubled because you are absent and distant from God; troubled because of your transgression against Him. Then there would be hope, for in time He would say to you "Fear not, I have redeemed thee; thou art Mine." Peace! Peace with God, the peace of God, is the peace that Christ has. Christ had trouble; now He has none. Christ had imputed sin; therefore His soul was troubled. Christ put away sin; now He is full of peace. His conflict is over, His enemies are under His feet, except those who are yet to be put under. He is expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool. Now that peace is to come to the saints. The God of all peace bless you with peace; fill you with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost. The kingdom of God is in this peace. It is not meat and drink but joy and peace and righteousness. It is in the Romans you have that word. This then is a very brief word about the covenant. May the Lord make it out to us - "Thou art the same."

Now one brief word about another perfection of God which is relative for, as I said this morning, this word is the power of God that is without change. His arm can never wax feeble. Who stretched out the heavens? Who called the stars by their names? How is it that not one of them faileth? Why? because the Lord is strong in power. And

He says to His poor, distracted, distraught people - "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding." "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." This is the arm that we need. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." You will fall below human help. You will find every human prop crack and break beneath you. But this, if this be beneath you, will sustain you; hold you up in floods and flames; take away the very nature of the fire when you are in the midst of it, so that not the smell of it shall be perceived upon you. This shall sustain you under the heaviest load nature shall be called upon to bear. This shall work deliverance for you, work miracles if necessary; the power of God.

Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail. The power of God is very necessary to true religion, both for communication of it and its maintenance; necessary for our knowing the power of the Scriptures. They must be applied to be powerful in us. Very necessary for prayer; praying in the Holy Ghost, that is, by His divine sustenance and sweet inspiration and intercession in the heart. Very necessary for a proper walk. "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness". Necessary for the warfare, for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Who can "withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand" without the power of God. Necessary to maintain faith in its exercise "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God". If somebody could persuade you tonight to believe, even in a natural way, somebody tomorrow night might persuade you to be an unbeliever. But if you have the faith of God's operation you have a faith that will live and labour under load, that, though damped, shall never die, till it dies in a blessed vision, an open vision, in glory.

Now I have said but a few words, a few hints, about a mighty

subject, but if they should lead you to consider who God is, consider Him in His eternity, immutability, and glory; consider Him in His relation to His children in the various acts, eminent acts that He did in Himself in eternity from which proceed His works of creation and in providence and grace and consider Him in whom God would manifest Himself continually to the Church, even Jesus Christ, I shall not have spoken in vain.

May the Lord be with you and be with all His saints.

AMEN.