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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday 3 October 1926  
(morning)

PSALM 119 v 11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I  
might not sin against Thee

The painful experience that is common to all the Lord's people, and most keenly felt where there is the most grace, is indwelling sin. That, from which they are saved, plagues them as long as they live, constitutes a large part of their sorrow; brings, when they indulge it, the chastening hand of God on them; mixes itself, with subtlety seldom perceived until the pain of it is felt, with all their things; each one saying, for himself, sin is mixed with all I do, and think and say. Though brought into the new covenant and dealt with in that covenant; though blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; though covered with His righteousness and purified by His blood; the saints have a sorrowful path by reason of indwelling sin. It hinders them in their steps toward heaven; hinders them in those gracious obligations which grace has laid on them; prevents them walking uprightly; prevents them praying without ceasing, and makes them, to their own sense of things, very barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of God. It is a very sad thing to be a sinner. A very merciful thing it is to feel it, but itself is very sad, grievous, and shameful. We find this throughout the Scripture and a great part of this infallible word is occupied about sin and it does not seem well when a professor is displaying much ignorance of this. The more God teaches a soul the more deeply and intimately and painfully is he acquainted with his malady, with the thing that is not to be eradicated while we live; the body of sin and death. Let every child of God here seek to bless God for that knowledge of sin that brings him grief and sorrow and brings him to the throne of grace, for there is but one remedy; that is grace, grace. "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." That is the reason that a person lives holily and righteously all the days of his life from regeneration. That is the secret and cause of a good victory that is obtained over any sin, lust, pride, vanity and all

kinds of evil; that is the secret of it all - "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace". Brought from the old dispensation, brought from the first covenant and put into the second and new covenant. Grace assures the subject of it victory. Victory lies in Christ and comes from Him to the soul. Sin is a shame; sin is a shame. It is a shame to any people; it is a stain to a sinner who is born again and blessed with mercy.

We see in Eden a pure man; we see him under the law which was given to him and we see him without any shame. And then we see him fallen and he then, with his wife, felt shame, and that which had caused no blush before, filled them with shame. Then God came to them, spoke to them, convinced them, instructed them, and brought them from the old covenant into a new covenant, in that promise: The Seed of the woman shall bruise thy head; thou shalt bruise His heel" There, in the substance of it, is the new covenant, and the new state into which the people of God are brought. It is a new state, and yet in this new state we have, and carry about with us, that which belongs to the old state; the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and the inclinations to sin in us, the falls that we get, the slips, the backslidings of which we are guilty. The indisposition to what is good, the aversion from everything that is holy, we have in this old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. And when we are taught of God, then that Adamic spirit that moved Adam to say to God, "The woman Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me and I did eat", is broken, and it is no longer this or that excuse that we make, but this is the thing - the feeling, I am guilty. No excuse; I am guilty; guilty of every wrong feeling; nobody to blame but myself. And God does use means in His family to preserve His children from sin, from sinning. Grace is given them and it is given them in certain means and one of them is in the text - "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." The tendency, the gracious effect, of every word of God in the soul made, given to it by the Holy Ghost, is to keep from sinning; to preserve the soul from falling into sin, from walking in sin. John, inspired by the Spirit, in his first Epistle, - after having spoken of these profound mysteries of the gospel in the Person of Christ - says "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not". The word in the heart is a bar to sin; it will keep you. Whenever any word

of God is with you it will preserve you and the thing to which, by nature, you are inclined; by temptation you are pressed; to which, by a certain sort of comfort, and perhaps pleasure, you may be drawn, that thing you will be preserved from if the Word of God is at the moment present with you, in your memory, in your heart. And this truth gives peculiar significance to the Scripture which I read. I have seen, I believe, a beauty, a divine beauty in the exhortations and admonitions of the Word of God, and the blessedness of having the Word in the heart and in the memory. I will write these things, says Peter, that you may have them always in remembrance; have them before your mind, have them in your heart, because, by having them there you will believe them and follow them, and doing that will be a means of preserving you from sinning. The connection is beautiful and it is intimate, and it must appeal to every understanding person in whom is the life of God, the fear of God, and the motions of the Spirit of God. You feel it, I have no doubt, as you are taught, and it is in the line of teaching that Peter sets before us in that chapter; it is this that brings fruitfulness. If you do these things, says Peter, they shall make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of God - neither be barren nor idle, as the margin reading is - because by that very operation of that truth in your conscience you will be made diligent in the things set before you. ...."Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." The doctrine of salvation is a blessed doctrine, and contains the whole of God's plan, the whole of His plan with His people in this world and in the world to come. He will have them walking according to His blessed Word. He could do it, if He had so purposed; He could have done this upright operation without contradiction, without opposition in the mind, but it has pleased Him as a wise Father in His family to give His children rules by which they are to walk in the house, which is the church of the living God, and it is very observable this, and it explains, as I judge, the reason of the exhortations and admonitions and warnings of the Scriptures addressed to the church of the living God. Nothing uncomely, nothing incongruous in this. They are children, they have a Father, their heavenly Father, and He cares for them, and shows His care by giving them rules, according to which He will have them walk,

and this truth belongs to every soul born again here. It belongs to each one of us to whom the Lord has given grace, life and the Spirit and if we walk indifferently, then we may do, as Philpot says: "If you will provide thorns for your dying pillow, walk carelessly". There is a great deal in it. This is the principle I would lay down for your close observation, that God has children, that He has made some of us unworthy creatures, His children; has called us by divine grace, called us, as the Apostle Paul speaks in the Hebrews, with a holy calling. What a calling. "Ye see your calling brethren". What a calling, holy calling; the Holy Ghost giving a holy principle, a holy life; giving grace, and making of an alien a child; of a rebel, a loyal subject; of a wicked person, a saint; and God has done this for some here and we are going to heaven. No good works enter into the title but bad works bring the rod. No good works stand before God in the way of justification, but careless walking brings reproofs. What an instance we have of this in the letters to the seven churches. What a faithful Friend as well as an Almighty Saviour did the Lord Jesus show Himself to be in those letters; acknowledging what was good in the churches, and discovering what was wrong and reproofing for the wrong and setting a door of repentance before those, His dear people. A door of repentance for the saints for those things which God discovered in them, discovered to them, to be wrong. And you know that word that occurs in each letter - "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The glory of God is involved in all this; the glory of God, it is here. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples". "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness". These exhortations are given to the Lord's people. They would be strange if they were addressed to the dead, but they are spoken to characters, not spoken to the dead in trespasses and sins. The law deals with them; the law deals with them and will deal with them through eternity if they die in their sins. The law says to every person born of Adam - and it abides on every unregenerate person - "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself." To every unregenerate person in this congregation that is the word of God; that is the standard, that is the balance, that is the rule, and you must walk by it; if you do not you are a sinner, and under the curse. But when one is born

again he is brought into a new order of things. No longer an alien, but a child; no longer a stranger, but a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. And so a different law comes into operation here, another law; that of grace - O grace, that charming sound - and it promises heaven and it says to the sinner to whom it promises heaven, "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness", adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things; so it speaks. There is not a child of God here, I am certain, who wont, who has not at times, blushed deeply in his spirit because of his shortcomings in these things. There is not one of us who has not at times felt condemned because he has come so short in these things. Now the Psalmist, in this word, expresses that which it may be we have been enabled to do in some measure. He says "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee". He saw what would keep him; he saw what would keep his feet from falling and his eyes from tears in the land of the living (Psalm 116 v 8/9). He saw his corruptions were too much for him left to themselves to work, but he saw how he could be kept. He knew the power of the Word of God; so do some of us. We know what power it has had in our consciences; how it has blessed us, humbled us, sanctified our affections, set us on the Lord's side. How it has helped us and strengthened faith; how it has sweetened care; how it has made us willing to walk in the path of tribulation; how it has assured us of a victory and told us that we should be helped to the end; enabled us to sing

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

O what a favoured sinner is that man who has the Word of God in him. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee..." What a favour to have a single Scripture in your heart in the power of it. "He sent His Word and healed them"; that was the medicine, the remedy. That was the plaster of figs for a sore boil; that was the good thing that God gave. He sent out His word and it lighted upon Jacob. It came to the person for whom it was sent. "He hath not dealt so with any nation". The Word of God, in the power of it, unites the sinner to God. "Ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto

you" O, it is a mercy to have this word in your soul in power and in glory. I hope we shall be able to hold fast the inspiration of the Bible, but this is it, above and beyond that, that blessed truth, to have the Scripture in your heart with real power, the power of God, the Holy Ghost. None can deny it, nor would deny, who have felt it, that the Word of God is a blessed and powerful, a cleansing, a teaching, a strengthening, a directing word, when it comes, as the Apostle says: The gospel came to you, not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. And there is this feature in it, as it were, it is like a hammer to sin, a forbidding to sin, a bar in the way of sin, and this, everyone knows, who has had, in any measure, the Word of the living God. You could not sin while under the power of any truth put into your heart by the Spirit. Oh, is it not wonderful for God to speak a word on your heart with power, to enable a child of His to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called; and, as the Word forbids sin, and is like a hammer, a bar against sin, to break its power and dominion, so also it has a cleansing effect. Oh, it sanctifies the soul. "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you". The wicked unbelief, the wicked hardness of heart, the dreadful ingratitude of our minds, our worldliness and all the evils that are in the old man, these lose their power, and this is how a sinner is led to understand the sanctifying effect of the word of God upon him. So here, the Psalmist knew what the word was, and it is a remarkable Psalm. He shows his profound knowledge of the Scripture; he expresses that in respect of the Word of God by calling it different names - statutes, judgments, testimonies, word. These, and the commandments, all these words are used to express the one thing in this Psalm, namely, the Word of God; and this Word he knew, he got it; he could not have hid it if he had not possessed it. You must first have it before you can hide it. "I have given them Thy Word". Has the Lord ever spoken to us, ever given a single Scripture to us, either of forgiveness or support under burdens, or guidance in difficulties, or for justification, or for acceptance, or for some instruction in trouble? He does give His Word and it fits the cases to which He sends it; it fits cases. A caseless religion will never benefit its possessor, nor honour God, but a case for God gets, if I may so express it, gets His notice; He looks upon it, and He speaks to it. He sends the Word, gives it to a company of ministers, and they publish it. Sends it by His Spirit to individual

cases and seals it on the heart with His Own gracious power. Now any word that has ever been spoken to any of us will have accomplished the divine purpose for which it was sent first. Whatever it was, whatever that purpose was, you found, as the word came, it effected the purpose of God in you. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will". Was it a word of encouragement? then what grace you need and will ever need, while in a waiting condition; what grace you need to hide that word in your heart lest you should be over much discouraged and sunk in fear. But would anybody steal it from you? Yes, unbelief would. Unbelief always contradicts God. Both in the Bible, as you read it, and in any word that is made over to you, it will contradict that. And Satan will; Hath the Lord said? If he went to a pure creature, Eve, and through her to Adam, and dared to say "Hath God said?", and if he dared to go to the spotless Saviour and tempt Him to go against the Scripture, will he spare to come to us and say, "Yea, hath God said?" and tempt us? And circumstances may seem to take it from us. That is, trouble comes, and we get so confused and set our hearts and attention so on the trouble, that, as it were, we forget everything that has been said to us, or all the lessons we have learned. What foolish creatures we are; how soon we forget. And so, if the Lord speaks a word of encouragement to any of you seeking His face in any particular thing, you will need faith to hide this word. That is, keep it in your heart, and have it before your memory, because plenty of discouragements will arise. Quantities of things will come against you and make you fear that the thing was not given; yea, and even make it seem that it is a proper thing for you to give up that which God gave to you. The subtlety of unbelief, the subtlety of the tempter, is such that they can make it seem proper, make it seem true humility, to give up the word that God caused you to hope upon. I have found this in my own case. The thing that you would not sin and do against God; the devil and your own heart may even turn to this. When you have said, many a time, may I never be a presumptuous sinner, temptation may say in your heart, it will be presumptuous for you to hold that. But faith in the blessed word of God as given and spoken will enable you to hold it fast. "Hold fast" said the Lord Jesus to one church, "that which thou already hast, that no man take thy crown". If the Word of God is gone we are poor. Nothing can replace it; nothing be a substitute for it. A kingdom would not be of any value compared with the worth of a single passage given to you by the

Holy Spirit; O it is true riches. When you have the Word of God you possess true riches. "Thy word". We shall know whether a word is spoken from God or not by the effect of it in our hearts and consciences. If you only know the Scriptures in the letter of them, you will lack many things. You will lack humility, tenderness, godliness, the fear of the Lord; you wont be afraid of sin or sinning. But if you get, if the Spirit of God gives you, a word from the Lord Himself, you will perceive that in the effect of it. You will wonder at His kindness; you will dissolve before His majesty; you will hate sin; you will love Him and follow hard after Him while the power of that is upon you. You will depart from evil under the power of the word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth". Now do take, as God may help you, particular notice of the different effects of the word being simply in the letter and the word coming with the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. You will always find that the latter does you good, raises your affections to God, makes Him great, makes sin hateful, makes your own ways despised and the ways of God you cleave to. "Thy Word". It is the gospel. "This is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you", says Peter. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away. But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you". So when you get the gospel, when it comes into your heart, when, as it came to the Thessalonians, it comes, not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, with much affliction, you will find that to be a living word. What poor lives we live without the Word of God. What poor, dying creatures we are in religion, without some operation of the Spirit and without faith wrought in us by the Eternal Spirit. But with the Word of God it is different; the soul is lively and there is unction, influence; a fitness, an authority, a beauty, a glory with the Word as it comes into the heart by the Spirit. We have many Scriptures in our memories from reading, but we have a few that have gone below our memories, that have sunk into our hearts, and these words, being in our hearts, faith hides them, keeps them, regards them, and yet some of you may say, but we forget them so quickly; they go away and we wonder if they did come from God. Now this exercise may prove very beneficial. If you are enabled to observe it and follow the matter up, it may prove a benefit. While you are wondering



whether it was from the Lord or not, you are kept from presumption. While you are wondering whether He spoke it, you are led to pray and ask Him to seal it with power or send it again like a living spring welling up in your heart and soul so as that you may say: I know the voice; I know the power. There is nothing in my nature like this; nothing gathers me up to God like this; nothing makes the Lord Jesus so precious as this. Everything in myself turns me away from Him; this turns me to Him; this gathers my soul up to Him; this makes Him the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. "Thy Word", not every Word. How often you may forget the whole of a sermon you sit here to hear. Perhaps one sentence, and that may be to you as the Word of God. O, the Word of the living God, as it comes to you new, as it were, and fresh from this blessed Book, into your soul, then you say: Now I know; I did not go for it, it came to me. I wanted it, I needed it, and I had been asking Him to give me something, and wondered if He would, and feared He would not because it did not come when I first asked for it, but now it has come I know. My sheep know My voice and they know it in the Word as it comes. "I have given them Thy Word", and Christ does give His Word to His people. He gives it them and as He gives it them they feel the power of it; they feel the influence of it. It touches their case; it speaks to their heart; it does them good. And it will do us good if we are enabled to measure our experience of the word by this, as a sort of rule and standard for us, whether God indeed has ever spoken to us, so as that we can say, we found in our hearts just what the Scripture spoke about.

"Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth". It is true and it is known to be true. You will find, when it is working in you according to the Spirit of God, you will find that it gives you a spiritual diligence. Give all diligence; add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge. I wonder how many of you are ever troubled about one thing, that is about your little, or perhaps you may say at times to yourself, no growth; babes still, if babes, you may say; just today where you were years ago. It is a trial to a tender soul not to grow, and the lack of this growth brings a person to look sorrowfully at a certain Scripture - at least it has that effect in me - "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit", and the lack of bearing fruit seems to say, you are only a branch mechanically, not vitally, united. It seems to say that, and when

that brings a trial, an exercise, and a searching, that is good. Do look and see if you can take anything more than milk. Strong meat is too much for the babe; it belongs to them that are of full age, or matured; who are exercised in the things of God. Strong meat does not suit the infant. Infancy in this exposes the child to many evils; the subtlety of Satan is too much for him; the subtlety of the old man within him is too much for him, and so, altogether interested in Christ and in a full gospel, experimentally he has very little. And if any of you feel that you fall under this word that I have spoken, may the Lord help you to take it, pray over it, and entreat Him to make a change in you, to bring you to a true exercise, and a maturity; that the Word of God may be a strong meat for you; that you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I think that today, for the most part, those, of whom we have little or no doubt as to their being the people of God, come under that word, that they need still to be fed with milk and not with strong meat, and if it be so with any of you, may the Lord bring you to a real exercise about it.

This Word - "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart" may be too much for you, may be a trial to you. You say

My memory bad, but what is sad  
Can folly still retain

and that is what every one will complain of more or less as exercised, but each one will want it to be more than that.

O fill it Lord, with Thy sweet Word  
And let it there remain

Paul speaks of "going on unto perfection", to maturity. Not a losing of sin, but the increase of knowledge, the knowledge of God and His Word. An increase, as it is called, with the increase of God; a growing. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart". O the devil will never let you alone if you have got the Word of God with you. Nor will envy be quiet if you have the Word of God in you. Many evils will rise if you have the Word of God in you. I can understand that the professor, and even the child of God in a bad state and not grown, will find very

little opposition, either from within or from Satan, but as the Lord is with a person, then more trouble comes; temptations grow, evil rises, and the person may think, I must be wrong to have these things as I have them. But it will be proved more or less distinctly, sooner or later, that that person, at that time, was under the special motion of the Word of the living God in his heart; hence the opposition.

"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee". You may go on without sinning against men and yet sin against God. You may not sin against your fellows, against your friends. The husband may not sin against his wife, nor the wife against her husband, and the child may walk in obedience to his parents, as he should do, and all the while there be this sinning against God; this sin of unbelief, this sin of casting away things, this sin of indifference, this sin of ceasing to pray, restraining prayer; this sin of neglecting the blessed throne of grace, of His divine means given. "That I might not sin against Thee"; that I might not indulge ingratitude nor any lust of the flesh, nor walk in the lust of the eyes, nor the pride of life. A bar against these sins being indulged, is the Word of God hid in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. May the Lord help us then carefully and prayerfully to attend to this great matter. See if you have the word and if, by faith, you are enabled to hold and plead it before His divine Majesty.

AMEN.