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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday morning 26 May 1918

PSALM 119 v 11

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

The Scriptures are the Word of God and ordinarily the Holy Ghost uses them for the good of His people. He quickens them by it. Begotten with the Word of truth, ye are a kind of first fruits of His creatures. (James 1 v 18). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever". (1 Peter 1 v 23). One of the greatest proofs of the inspiration of the Scripture is that it is an incorruptible word; therefore it abides in the heart into which it is dropped as an incorruptible seed. If it were a human word only it would decay and die, because everything that emanates from us is tainted. The word of God is, in the Scriptures, spoken of as a light that shineth in a dark place. It comes from heaven, it is a revelation of God, a revelation of God in every person to whom it is given by the Holy Ghost. It is a sea of glass upon which all stand, who are blessed with grace. It is a word of liberty spoken by the Lord to the bondaged, a word of health and cure spoken to the soul that is sick, and a word of pardon spoken to the guilty, sensible of their wretched case. It is the word of the living God and it is settled for ever in heaven, and heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of the word of God shall pass away. And it is therefore an unspeakable blessing to have the word of God given to you so that, receiving it from Him, whose word it is, you may hide it in your hearts. It was God's direction to Joshua that he should make his way prosperous and have good success by meditating in the law - the word of God that then was - day and night, for all directions necessary to his movements, all manifestations of the will of God concerning Israel, concerning the promises that were made, concerning God's intentions respecting that nation, were contained in the word of God that then was. And it is according to true experience that, just in the measure of our receiving God's truth, either in doctrine or precept, or admonition, or warning, our

souls thrive. If we are right, in some degree we live on the word of God. Vital religion comes from heaven and is, according to the Scripture, God's blessed gift to a sinner. And if the Lord will help me a little this morning I shall speak first upon the word of God; secondly about its reception by faith and what faith does with it, and thirdly the end of that that faith does with the word of God: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart", to this end "that I might not sin against Thee". He could not hide it in his heart unless he possessed it. What he possessed was the word of God; the word of God which is, to the people of God, spirit and life, is the gospel of His grace which He sends out to their sick souls to heal them. "I will bring it health and cure" is His promise. It is therefore the word of the truth of the gospel that comes to them and fits into their cases. It is when the Spirit takes of the written word - O that we might prize the word more and more - and fits it into a case and gives the sinner to receive it. He sent out a word and it lighted upon Israel (Isaiah 9 v 8). He sent out His word and melted them (Psalm 147 v 18). He gave it to Jeremiah, indeed as a prophet in that case; He gave it to Jeremiah (Jeremiah v 15 v 16) who said: "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart". He gave it to the prophet Ezekiel in the same way (Ezekiel 3 v 3) He was to eat the roll and it was very sweet to his pallet. This Book will stand and whatever of it you get from the Lord will stand. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works". What dark hearts are ours until enlightned. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." What idolators we are by nature. But, said Paul to other idolators, even to the Thessalonians: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power", and you received it in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, and ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God. That was what was effected in them by the word of God. It came to David who was an inspired penman. David said: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue"; it came to him. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. So that the word is a sure, unerring light, and it becomes the very property of sinners to whom the Spirit imparts it. It speaks to them; it is not a general sound, but to them a particular

word, something that God has said. If you read the letter of the Scripture you will see it is remarkably particular. The statements of it are distinct; the doctrines of it are clear; the promises of God are particular, they are given to certain people. If you read the precepts, you will find that they are quite clear; admonitions are as clear. The warnings, every part of the Scriptures in respect of the holy gospel are perfectly clear. I do not mean that they are easily understood; No, there is a mystery in the Scriptures; there is a deep couching in the Scriptures; there is a meaning beneath the form and expression of the Scriptures. But I mean that they are quite distinct in their teaching, and I say this because I would speak to this point. The Scriptures are very clear in their teaching. If they tell a man that he is a sinner and lost, that man is brought, by the Spirit, who applies them to him, to see, with some clearness, his condition, If they tell him of the gospel, his eyes are opened to see the gospel. If they speak a promise to him, then his faith receives it. The word of God is a great, a wonderful, a blessed word, and when the Lord is pleased to give us to realise something of it in its blessedness, we can understand one who penned these words "Precious Bible, what a treasure". O may the Lord give us to value His holy Scriptures; they are not to be trifled with; they are a standard, a reed by which we shall all be measured. They are a balance into which we shall all be put to be weighed. They are a judgment from which none of us can escape. This word, the Psalmist said, he hid in his heart, this incorruptible word, the seed of God. It is likened to a seed and the Lord, He speaks it to a sower - A sower went forth to sow, and He says "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". This is the standard my friends. Now I would look at this word of God becoming a person's own. If you are ever rightly brought under the power of the word of God it will be by its becoming your word, that is, a word given to you, the word of His grace. What an amazing word; the word that declares God's grace, that declares it in the heart; the word preached by the great Preacher, Christ Himself. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach glad tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to

give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified". Now take this, then, the word of salvation as it comes into a sinner's heart by the application of the Holy Ghost; what a word it is. "Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love". "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin". "Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price". Think of this, that the great and blessed God, does really speak to sinners, and does tell them that He has loved them, that the blood of Christ cleanseth them from all sin, that they are accepted in the Beloved, that there is no sin left between them and their God, and then they rejoice in Him who is their salvation. Ten thousand human tongues, unless God uses them, would be of no avail to a sinner on this point. But the whisper of the still small voice in his heart assures him beyond all question and doubt for the time. Burdened with sin, harrassed with tormenting doubts and tormenting fears, the sinner has no comfort in himself, but when God gives the word, the word of grace, the word of salvation, then the sinner receives it, hears it, feels it, falls under it. The power of it is in him; the blood of Christ cleanses him from all sin, removes his guilt from his conscience, and makes him understand that he really is saved and his soul comes into happy liberty, sweet, true liberty. "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed". It is a word that dissipates all darkness and scatters all bondage and fear. It is a word of revelation. That God would give them, the Ephesians, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ was Paul's prayer for them. Here Christ is revealed distinctly in the Bible. He is revealed as crucified, as dead, as buried, as raised again, as ascended on high, as now in heaven. This is revelation, and yet men read it and see nothing of it. Some here have never seen it, though they have read it, it may be very often, and they have heard it in this chapel many, many, many times, and you have not seen it. How can you hide it in your heart when you have not seen it and do not possess it? But now, when the Holy Ghost comes and gives that mercy, that great, that sweet, that wonderful mercy, the revelation of Christ, when He enters, comes into the heart, walks with the sinner, blesses him, comforts him, tells him it is well with him, assures his conscience, sets his mind and heart at rest, a sinner looks on his beloved Lord, embraces Him by faith, receives the word of

revelation sweetly, believably receives it, and for the moment has not a doubt. Christ is in him, dwells in him. He is there, the hope of glory, and the holy solemnity, the sweet peace and mercy, the brokenness of heart, the contrition, the happiness, the satisfaction felt, can never be described. This is done more or less distinctly, immediately, by the word of God. Unto you is the word of salvation sent. Christ comes and turns poor people from their iniquities and saves them from their sins and thus is fulfilled His blessed Name - "His Name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins". They receive the word of promise. How often have you searched, some of you, the holy Scripture if haply your eye might light on some sweet promise there, that you should not look on a promise as on a beautiful picture but receive it as a living word from the mouth of the living God. If you look into the Scriptures you will see that many of the saints did receive God's word like that. How could David have believed that God would make of him a great house unless God had told him so? How could Jacob know that it would be well with him if he left Laban and went back to his kindred and to his country, unless God told him it should be so? How could Joshua know that within a certain time, or if at all, he should lead Israel into the land of promise, if he had not had a word concerning it? How could David have known that the sin, the terrible fall, that burdened him with guilt, and killed him as to all hope for a time, that all that was forgiven, and that he should not die as he deserved, and ought to do by the law, if the Lord had not told him? And how should Paul know that he would not perish and that no one man on the ship would perish, if the Lord had not told him so? The case is this, we can know nothing of God's intentions, and nothing of our interest in His mercies, until, and unless, He is pleased to tell us, and He tells us by means of Scriptures often. O, the sweetness of the Bible, then. It is always good, but it is good and it is sweet when such and such parts of it are made over to us. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". That assures the man to whom it is spoken. "I will guide thee with My eye". That is a certain word to the sinner who gets it. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also". What an assurance this must have

imparted to these disciples to whom it was first spoken, and would your assurance be less than theirs, if God were to speak the same word to you, in the same degree of power, light and glory? No, the word of promise is a great word. Whatever the word of promise is that you receive; it is a sure word. All the promises of God in Christ are yea and in Him amen unto the glory of God by us. Promises are full things; promises are like blank cheques; you can never write on them as much as they mean and contain. Promises are never exhausted by those to whom they are given. You will never get to the end of one word of promise that God has spoken to you. All that you need here, all that you are to have hereafter, the promise contains. What an amazing thing it is to have the word of God given to you. Sometimes it pleases God to give precepts, warnings, admonitions to His dear children. He tells them what to do. Come out from the world and be separate. He tells them what not to do. Not to condone any wrong thing, either in doctrine or practice. He warns them against giving way to the devil; resist him, He says, and he will flee from you. He warns them against friendship with the world. If any man will be a friend of this world he is an enemy of God. He warns them against all improper practices, all dishonesty, all lying and cheating and idleness; against all unfairness in conduct. He warns the masters what to do and tells the servants how to serve, and the word of God is thus a very full word and it leaves the saints without any excuse whatever. This is the rule, my friends. What God in His holy Scripture, in the everlasting gospel has been pleased to say, that is the rule. Now when you get anything like this on your heart, it is God's word to you, and a great word. Does He speak a word of warning? Your faith will listen to it. Does He lay down a precept? Your faith will desire to walk according to it. Does He tell you how to behave in your house, in your business as a master or as a servant? Then your faith will want to walk according to it. The word of God is also a word that sets before His children their blessed relationship to Him. They are bound up with Him in the bundle of life. They are the children of the living God. They are united to Him as the Vine has branches united to it. They are united to God in Christ in that great, that intimate, way. Now I say, when the word is made yours - not when you go to it; do go to it by all means; do read, O read it diligently and read it constantly - when it, as you may be reading it, or when you are not reading it, comes in some portion of it to you. Perhaps a Psalm is opened, or a verse in a

Psalm; perhaps a doctrine is revealed at this time, and perhaps a precept is fixed upon your mind. Ah, then it becomes yours. That is the point I want to bring before you particularly; the word becomes yours. One may say, but if one part belongs to a child of God, all parts belong to him, and that is quite true; in doctrine that is quite true, but in experience this is true; you have just as much as God has given to you. Remember what the Lord said to Joshua. Every place that the sole of thy feet shall tread upon have I given to thee, and every bit of the word of God that you get is yours. Sometimes you get it by prayer; sometimes you get it by your bow in battle, when the Holy Ghost will give you some word, sometimes when you are not expecting it. It will be like a summer shower falling down upon you, not tarrying for you to get into a good frame, or this, or that. And sometimes when you are in sore conflict and battle, it comes to you and says, the battle is the Lord's, not yours. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Ah sometimes you are in sore doubt, and under tormenting fear; then some word surprises you by speaking on your heart and telling you not to fear. Sometimes you may be afraid of men, and the Scripture may speak to you. Be not afraid of their faces; fear not, for no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. It is made yours; that is the thing. However it comes, coming with power, coming from God, coming into your heart, it is yours. O what a mercy. You may say, well I do not know where my next meal is coming from, but I do know this; God will give me one. Why do you know it? Why, you may say, because He promised that my bread should be given me and my waters should be sure. You may say, I am full of sin, and it scarcely ever leaves off struggling for the mastery, and I am afraid sometimes I shall get a fall by it, but I do believe I shall get to heaven notwithstanding. And how do you know it? Because, you say, He promised me. He told me my sins were forgiven. Sometimes you may say, I think the devil will give me a trip yet and I shall fall, and yet I believe I shall be more than a conqueror, and if you ask me why, you say, I can tell you, the Lord told me that He would bruise Satan under my feet, and that He conquered death and him that had the power of death, that is the devil, for me. What a blessed man is he who has the word of God in his heart.

Now in the next place, said the Psalmist, I have hid Thy word in my heart. And what is this? What is it, but an act of faith, faith

that hears the word that God speaks and lays hold of it, that meditates upon it at times, that says that it is a great word that God spoke to me and it is in his heart; as it were he hides it, and there are two or three thoughts I would just lay before you in connection with this. First of all it is not for public gaze. It cost Hezekiah something when he exhibited all the treasures of his house to these ambassadors from Babylon, and you may say sometimes, this is not for everybody to see. Christ said, "Cast not your pearls before swine". Paul says in one place in the Romans, "Hast thou faith have it to thyself before God". As if a man should say, now this is a peculiar treasure in my family, an heirloom. And where do I keep it? On my table, on my sideboard, that when anybody comes into my dining room he may look at it? It is locked up. He says perhaps I have taken it to my bank; it is in a strong room there. And you may say sometimes of a word God has spoken to you, a promise He has given to you, a doctrine He has opened to you, a revelation He has made to you, now this I would like to shut up in my heart and keep it there. It is not for public gaze. The fruit will be public as far as your life is conformed to God's word. Men will see the word in you, a light set on a hill, a city there that cannot be hid, but the builder of it, that is another thing. The word in you, that is hid in your heart from public gaze. And another thought is this, you hide it in your heart lest you should be robbed of it. The devil walketh about as a roaring lion, a robber, a murderer, and carnal reason also comes in and wants to rob you of it. Why sometimes when you get a good hearing you do not want even the society of your godly friends lest, not having had the same, and being, it may be, in a bad state, they should rob you. You want to go home and meditate upon what the Lord has said, think upon His touches, His teaching, His mercies, His assistances to you and it is, as it were, you hide it away; this is mine, this is my portion, this is my bread, this is my sustenance. The Apostle Paul recorded occasionally the way of his conversion, that it was his own. He said, you know, on one occasion, the men that were with me saw indeed the light, but they heard not the voice that spake with me. And you will hide that; that was a peculiar voice, the still small voice that melted your heart, that made you wrap your mantle about your face; that, that became your own, peculiarly your own. Plenty of it for other people - millions have had the same - but it is yours. I hid it in my heart lest I should lose it, lest I should lose the comfort of it, and the

sweetness of it, and the power of it. God's glory is here, a good deal, for when you have a word in your hand, in your heart, when you eat it, meditate upon it, when faith scrutinises it - sometimes it is so; faith scrutinises it, looks into it - O, what beauties are seen; I need not tell you, who have had this experience. What a beauty you see in that word, what a beauty in the other word. Beauties, full; the promise, full. The gospel, the Christ of God, the precious Christ of God brought to you. His blood brought to your conscience; His righteousness revealed for your justification; His grace for your sanctification; His prayer for your help, through His faith, by which you will stand, as Peter solemnly and blessedly proved. O, the beauties of a promise; the fulness of a promise too; it can never be emptied. If you have had fifty years of experience of God in one promise, it is as full now as it was the moment you received it, and it is capable of many more fulfilments. And if God gives the fulfilling of it to you as long as you live, then you will say you have not got to the end of it, and you never will. Now faith sometimes sees it. Then there is another thought here I would lay before you; it is this - against a time of trial. A promise of life, the promise that is life in you, will be succeeded by a death; the sweetness will be followed by a bitterness. The trial of your faith is connected with what God has said to your faith. Circumstances came against Jacob's safe return, apparently. Said he, Thou didst say return unto thy kindred and to thy country and I will be with thee. Lord, he said, here is Esau my brother, and I am afraid of him. Some trouble comes on a mercy, some death succeeds a felt life, some apparent contradiction succeeds a promise spoken into your heart. And now what? Like Christian and Apollyon coming against him, you may for a moment, lose sight of the promise, but after a time, the secret motion of the Holy Ghost will be in you and you will, like Christian, remember; it will come into your mind like the disciples. Then they remembered the word that the Lord had spoken to them. And you will remember this that you have laid up against a day of trouble. It will be in your heart a living word, in your memory a sweet thing, a new influence. Just like at the first, when it came, so is the power again. You remember it as God's blessed word in you. You hid it there against a time to come, and there is coming a time when we shall need all that God gives us. Days of trouble, days of trial will come and succeed days of comfort. Sing while you can, my friends, in the presence, and by the mercy, of

God, for the days of darkness are many. In the day of prosperity be joyful; in the day of adversity consider, consider what God said to you; consider that He told you that you should have tribulation; consider that He told you that He would not leave you nor forsake you. Consider that His promise cannot fail, that He remains faithful, that His character is "God that cannot lie". He had an end in hiding this word in his heart, namely this, "that I might not sin against Thee". The word of God in the heart of memory, living and working, is a preservative against falling into sin. When you forget that God has purged you from your old state, then what solemn weakness comes, and how you may be slipping here, and failing and falling there. You see the effect of not having the word of God with you, once in David's case. O, if the word of God had been like a bar on that eventful evening, and had said to David, now you are easy and if you go to the house top you will get a fall, you will break your bones, what a mercy it would have been for him. But there was no word at that moment preventing him, no portion of truth, by the Spirit, in his heart, so he tumbled into sin. If the word of God is in your heart, the power of God will be before your eyes. Some of us know painfully this kind of thing. You can look back - I can look back - and see certain points and places where, if there had been any truth of God operating in our hearts, there would have been a sweet prevention of some things into which we went. I know it too painfully. The Apostle John writes: "These things I write unto you, little children, that ye sin not", by which he would say that the influence of truth is against the condoning of sin. And is it not so? Do you not know it? When are you most tender, most afraid of falling, most afraid of dishonouring the Lord's Name? When are you most afraid of walking so as that you lose His sacred presence? When some truth is lively in you; when some promise, or warning, or exhortation, or precept, is lively in your conscience, making it tender, and moving the fear of God, so as that it shall be as a light shining upon the road, a bar to all that is wrong, a direction in all that is right. "That I may not sin against Thee". One thing is certain; you will never find sin a cheap thing; you will never find brow-beating your conscience an easy business. But if, through grace, your faith receives the word, and you can say, now this is a blessed word, this is better to me than mines of gold and silver, and this I desire to lay hold of and keep, lest I should sin against God, through the dreadful unbelief of my nature and the

abominable wickedness of my heart; that I may not indulge those things which conscience, enlightened by the Spirit, tells me are wrong. Well, dear friends, it will be a great mercy if we can walk in this path. Remember the word God has spoken to you; remember the exhortation He has given you; remember the word of His salvation which He has sent to you; and as you are enabled to do so you will find the effect is holiness in your affections, and a desire to walk before the Lord with all uprightness, godliness and tenderness.

AMEN.